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TESIS DOCTORAL

GEORGE ORWELL, PROPHET OF "POLITICAL CORRECTNESS" (P C): LANGUAGE AND ANTI-UTOPIA FIFTY YEARS ON

Tesis presentada por la Lda. Annette Gomis van Heteren, bajo la dirección del Prof. Dr. Miguel Martínez López, para la obtención del grado de Doctora en Filología Inglesa

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For Juan

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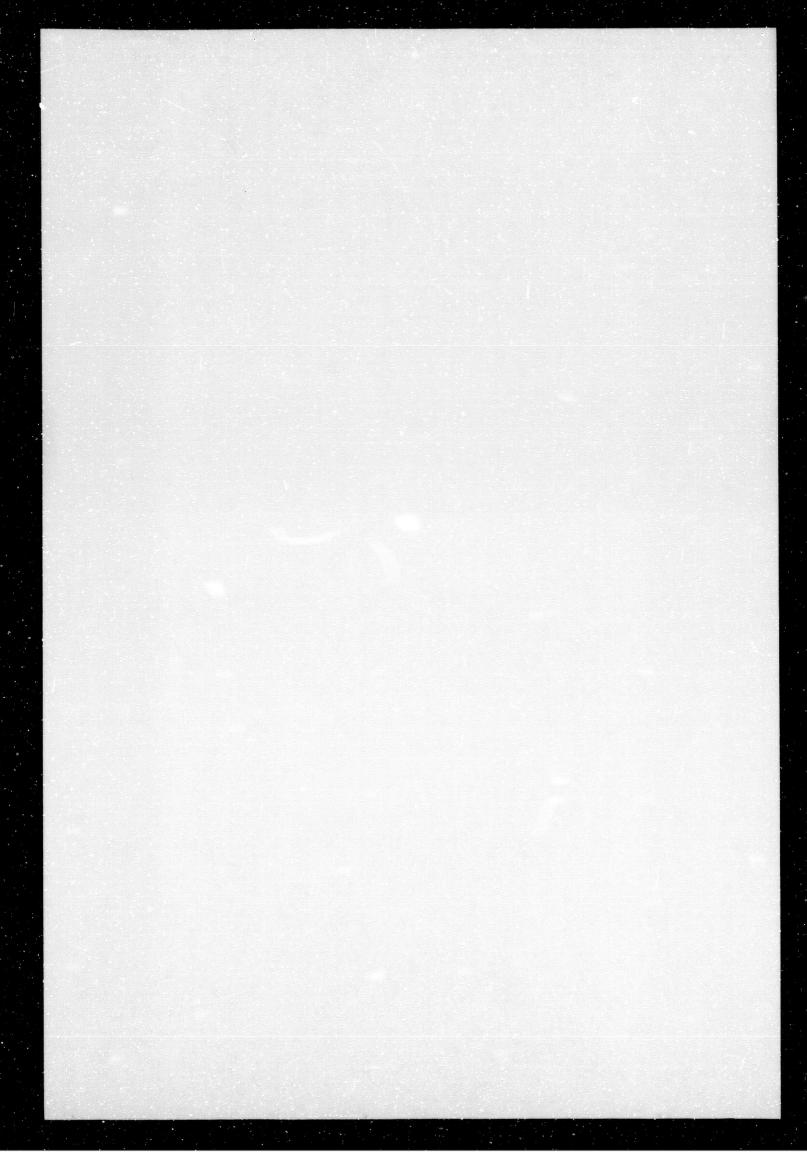
My husband Juan has selflessly been at my side, sharing the highs and the lows and helping me in so many ways that to do justice to his contribution would need another thesis. Without him this one would never have been finished.

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INTRODUCTION

George Orwell demonstrated his interest and attention to language over many years in different writing contexts, and among his chief concerns was the power of language. How and why we choose to use certain items of language is one of the key questions implicit in the whole political correctness debate, conducted more than forty years after Orwell's death, and the present study seeks to link the principal topics concerned with the issues to which political correctness gives rise, and those that touch upon the effects, which Orwell had foreseen. He was indeed a "prophet" of political correctness in that he voiced misgivings about misuse of language and about its potential use for illicit aims which are currently echoed in the debate that political correctness has engendered.

In order to scrutinize the phenomenon of political correctness the structure of this dissertation is as follows: section 2.i. examines euphemisms, how and why they are used, establishing the connection with the more recent appearance of politically correct terms. 2.ii. is concerned with a brief overview of recent hypotheses on the connection between language, thought and reality, since the words we use and the effect they produce upon the hearer

are central concepts to discussion about our choice of words. 2.iii. researches the origins of political correctness in the United States, dealing with its incidence on university and college campuses, its influence upon literature faculties, how it pays particular attention to the interests of minority groups, and finally, the part the press has played in enhancing the polemic derived from the political correctness debate. It cannot escape our attention that while the United States represents a culture very different in many ways from our own, nevertheless its way of life is highly influential in Europe, and consequently PC has become installed as a fact of life in Britain, and the trend is towards an ever-growing presence and awareness of the issues it raises in countries that do not share the common language of English.

George Orwell is examined as journalist and essayist in chapter 3, with particular attention to the facets of language and totalitarianism which characterise his principal concerns, especially during the 1940s. Accordingly, 3.i. charts the author's linguistic awareness through the themes of many of his major essays, while 3.ii. examines some of the criticism which has greeted these views. 3.iii. deals with Orwell's anxiety about the use of propaganda to further the aims of totalitarianism and with his ideas on the essence of this system of government which he feared would extend to many more countries than Hitler's Germany and Stalin's Russia. 3.iv. offers a brief overview of critical reception of Orwell's dual concerns about politics and language, and the chapter on the journalistic output of the author ends in 3.v. examining Orwell's views on the relationship between language, reality and interpretation, noting the influence his ideas have had and how he foresaw many trends in language

that are present today.

Chapter 4 investigates how these concerns are given fictional form in his last and most influential novel, Nineteen Eighty-Four, 4.i. looking at Orwell's creation of Newspeak and examining how it is used together with euphemisms as elements of control in the totalitarian system of Oceania, while 4.ii. similarly examines how control of truth and the past are used in the maintenance of totalitarianism. The novel is again the subject of chapter 5, which concentrates on its place in utopian literature, some of whose problems with respect to genre are discussed in 5.i. The role of the two insertions of expository prose, Goldstein's Book in 5.ii., and the Appendix in 5.iii. with their explanations of the past and the putative future of the totalitarian regime respectively underline the utopian genre of the novel.

The common characteristics in political correctness and Orwell's concerns with language and totalitarianism are examined in chapter 6, in which the conclusions are stated. Orwell's views on the society of his time expressed in his fiction as well as his non-fiction are compared and contrasted with trends in western society on the eve of the twenty-first century. The references to the works cited are followed by a summary of the conclusions in Spanish.

It is true that there are not many generalizations which achieve universal approbation, but a little introspection would probably lead us to concur with the statement that "if someone agrees with us on the aims and uses of culture, we think him objective." This is relevant to political correctness which is primarily concerned with questions of culture, as understood in terms of race,

sex, minority group rights, affirmative action and speech codes. Advocates and detractors echo the debate previously conducted by Whorf, Sapir, Wittgenstein, Austen, Cavelle, among others, who consider the degree to which thought and language control each other.

The linguistic phenomenon known as political correctness (PC) began to achieve public prominence, and indeed notoriety, in the United States during the latter part of the nineteen eighties. One explanation of the origin of the expression 'politically correct', reiterated by many writers, is offered by Barbara Ehrenreich, who sees it as having been "crafted by people on the left, some time in the seventies [...] as a form of self-mockery." However, the term 'political correctness' has been abused in such a frivolous way and on such a wide scale that some believe that, in common usage it has come to be equated with a pejorative term for leftist activism. Deborah Cameron, whose views will be much discussed in this dissertation, establishes the importance which the term has acquired, both in the United States and in Britain:

Whether 'political correctness' really does refer to an entity in the world is open to question, but it is undoubtedly an item in the lexicon of our language. The way right-wing commentators have established certain presuppositions about it is a triumph -as a sociolinguist I can only admire it- of the politics of definition, of linguistic intervention. 'PC' now has such negative connotations for so many people, the mere invocation of the phrase can move those so labelled to elaborate disclaimers, or reduce them to silence.⁴

This dissertation does not reproduce the pejorative connotation that has

been commented upon above, and for want of a better alternative, will use throughout, either the abbreviation *PC* or *political correctness*, their alternation being dictated by considerations of style.

That an interest in the vicissitudes and fate of the English language on the part of a large group of its native speakers has always existed, and no doubt always will exist, is borne out by the constant stream of correspondence to the editors of the daily newspapers on just this subject. In Britain the figure of "Disgusted, Tunbridge Wells" stands for the prototypical irate defender of the purity of the language of Shakespeare, ever ready to point out the wayward use of a split infinitive, or the encroachment of some colloquialism, whose use threatens to taint "correct" usage.

However, many people who are concerned professionally with the study of linguistics are often quick to dismiss or to smile benignly at the protestations of these lay-persons. Nevertheless, it should not be forgotten that a dictionary as prestigious as the Oxford English Dictionary used to rely almost exclusively for the compilation of its entries upon the contributions of voluntary readers who supplied excerpts from texts they had read on slips of paper to authenticate the use of particular words and demonstrate their definition. The uneasy coexistence of the professionals' views on language and those of persons not specifically trained in linguistics will be a continuing theme throughout this dissertation.

The absence of an English Language Academy is often cited positively by professional linguists who claim that their job is not to be prescriptivist but descriptivist. Yet, as has been powerfully argued, both description and prescription are "aspects of a single (and normative) activity: a struggle to control language by defining its nature." Cameron uses the term "verbal hygiene" for the critical reflection on language in an evaluative way. As she points out, very few people reject all legitimate authority in language, and by virtue of this fact we are all "closet prescriptivists". This is undoubtedly relevant to the political correctness debate. This debate (sometimes termed "war") hinges on the outcry at the advocacy of certain terms to refer to topics concerned with issues considered sensitive, such as racism, sexism and other manifestations of prejudice.

The public prominence and notoriety of PC referred to above is evidenced by its coverage in the media, notably the written press. Again, this began in the United States, but its repercussion has been echoed in the daily press in Britain, and, to a lesser extent, in the weeklies. There has been a great simplification of the topics involved with political correctness, which have been belittled and ridiculed. As will be shown, this trivialization of political correctness in the media is far from being a phenomenon of the tabloid press alone.

It would be a mistake to consider the analysis of political correctness as limited to the humorous or ill-humoured attention of the media. Serious scholarship on the subject was marked with the appearance in 1992 in the United States of a collection of essays edited by Paul Berman and of another by Patricia Aufderheide⁶. These works have since been followed by others which examine different aspects of the PC debate, many limiting themselves to the problems that have arisen on American university campuses, or to

has been fought with some of the greatest acrimony on American university campuses. In the first collection of essays dedicated to the political correctness debate to appear in Britain, the importance of what occurs on university campuses in the United States is attributed to the fact that nearly fifty per cent of all Americans go to college, and consequently what happens there has an impact on the rest of the country.

The point of view of a North American University professor and defender of PC runs as follows:

Political correctness arose as a challenge to the common Western assumption that Western culture and European-centred literatures and perspectives are globally the best. Advocates of PC reject that pro-Western view precisely on the grounds that Professor Narveson articulates, namely that there are no established cross-cultural standards for judging the merits of cultures or literary traditions. This rejection of the presumed universal superiority of Western culture is precisely what paves the way for defending multicultural studies.⁸

Opinions like these, which reject so-called Eurocentrism in principle, are regarded as highly dangerous and subversive of traditional values by those who oppose political correctness.

The idea of a possible correlation between George Orwell and PC arose from a rereading of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* in which the use of Newspeak to control the minds of the inhabitants of Oceania evoked thoughts of the parallels with the "language" of political correctness, in so far as both can be thought

of in terms of tyranny. Erika Gottlieb in her study of Nineteen Eighty-Four and Orwell, The Orwell Conundrum, points to the central theme of language and totalitarianism:

It is significant that Orwell uses the debasement of language as the central metaphor to show the debasement of our humanity in the totalitarian system, a system based on a corrupt and corrupting mentality we may all succumb to if we are not vigilant.[...] The destruction of critical thought and free expression, the destruction of the truth of the Word, is tantamount to the disintegration, the dehumanization of the psyche. By extension of this thought, it is only through the Word, through respect for objective truth, through the careful, critical investigation of our own consciousness that we can hope to remain human.

Orwell was clearly highlighting the influence of language on behaviour. Was this not what certain critics of PC were accusing advocates of political correctness of trying to provoke? Was this what those advocates of PC wished to accomplish? These questions and a series of related topics began to take shape when a deeper examination of both Orwell and PC was undertaken.

A first step comprised a detailed study of the origins and development of political correctness. A very important consideration is the facet of PC as a form of carefully crafted euphemism. Much has been written on the subject of euphemism, but little attention has been given, even in the most recent works, to political correctness.

An interest in language itself and in its "perversions" became significant in the American press during the Vietnam War, in what can now be seen as a

precursor of political correctness. The terms *Haigspeak* and *Pentagonese* came to stand for the official, euphemistic explanations of the suffering which was inflicted upon Vietnamese civilians during that war. One of the many examples of those who showed themselves aware of this trend is the journalist Charles McCabe whose column in the *San Francisco Chronicle* "reminded us that 'escalate', 'police action', 'advisory intervention', 'expend ordnance' were a kind of 'mortician's lingo' to cover up death and savagery. He also reminded us how much we rely on acronyms or abbreviations to disguise: 'killed in action' (KIA) or 'dead on arrival' (DOA)".¹⁰

We see that by using a term such as 'controlled response' (which, as nearly as McCabe could understand, meant that we refrain from the automatic bombing of cities in a nuclear war), those uttering it could feel themselves somehow absolved from blame for what they were proposing. By analogy, in referring to a homosexual as 'gay', his/her behaviour identified by sexual inclinations becomes more acceptable in society as a whole.

In the decade of the seventies, politicians explaining the Watergate episode and covering up for their President provided many examples of linguistic "perversions" or manipulations. Father John McClaughlin, Jesuit priest and "special assistant" to President Nixon, found himself able to defend his President over the bombing of North Vietnam and the mining of Haiphong Harbour in the following way:

In valuating the President's morality we ought to look at the extent to which he has produced a climate of charity in the international community at home. He has reduced those forces

that would militate against charity, against constructive human interaction, and I would say to you that he has more than any other leader of this century reduced violence, aggression, insurgency, militarism and war in the twentieth century by a thousand per cent.¹¹

Many euphemistic terms have since been incorporated into the language, at least at an official level. So, for example, in the Gulf War of the nineties, "collateral damage", which appeared time and again in official communiques, was understood to refer to the bombing of (presumably innocent) civilians. Yet political correctness could not be adequately described solely as euphemistic usage. If it had been, then the battery of criticism levelled against it would have stopped short of the linguistic excesses which have come to characterize the whole phenomenon. As Joan Scott explains, if political correctness had been confined to the university campus where it originated, it would have just been considered another form of academic dispute, but "in the hands first of New York Times reporter Richard Bernstein, and then of other journalists, joined by conservative scholars, businessmen, and politicians, it has been escalated into a political 'crisis'." 12

The year of 1984, which saw the publication of many books and articles commemorating the coincidence of the chronological year and the title of Orwell's last novel, lies between the seventies with *Haigspeak* and *Pentagonese* and the nineties with PC, but the following excerpt from the introduction to a *Dictionary of Jargon* serves to illustrate some of the anxiety with what was happening to language as it was then perceived:

In Orwell's nightmare future, where totalitarian simplicity has been stamped upon a world once less black and white, this continuing reduction of language was the perfect verbal extension of the social process. In the event, the chronological 1984 appears along lines very different from Orwell's grim blueprint. Yet no-one would deny that a form of 'newspeak', however altered, is all too prevalent. Where Orwell's society was governed by the stick, we are offered the carrot. The truncation of the language on 'Airstrip One' was a logical response to the harsh, social engineering that engendered it. The soothing, delusory world of 'equality', of much-touted 'democracy', has created a newspeak all its own. Rather than shorten the language it is infinitely broadened; instead of curt monosyllables, there are mellifluous, calming phrases, designed to allay suspicions, modify facts and divert one's attention from difficulties. Thus doubleplusungood becomes 'negative evaluation', sexcrime 'interpersonal relation-ship', rocket bombs, 'systems' and their effects fall neither on proles nor on Party, but are simply 'collateral damage'. The new newspeak is of a different tone from its fictional predecessor. Orders have been modified into persuasion. Ignorance, desired or not, is made to seem bliss.13

In order to link up the writing of George Orwell and the PC debate, I began by studying Orwell's thinking, particularly in the sphere of his ideas about language, manifested both in his activity as an essayist and as a novelist. His views had much in common with the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis which posits that language influences and even determines how its speakers understand the world around them.¹⁴ In the same way as the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis has been hotly contested by linguists down the years, so have Orwell's views been

derided by professionals of language. In his novels his ideas about totalitarianism and language culminated in his conception of Newspeak in his last novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, which is only one of the manifestations of his constant concern with language.

Orwell was passionate about the English language, as he was about politics, and one of his best known and most influential essays is aptly entitled "Politics and the English Language". As a novelist, he subsequently explored the use of language as control, particularly in *Animal Farm* and in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, where he depicted its role in the context of totalitarian societies. As an essayist and as a journalist he reiterated his opinions and preoccupation with what he saw as the use and abuse of contemporary English. To what extent do Orwell's views on using language to influence thought and curtail liberty in a totalitarian society, coincide with the beliefs of critics of political correctness? This is a question which will be addressed during the course of the present study.

Naturally, the focus of this dissertation, linking Orwell's thought to the phenomenon of PC, must involve an examination of some of his works with particular reference not only to his views on language but also on liberty. Orwell was a prolific journalist and essayist, and this part of his output together with his letters, arranged chronologically in a four-volume collection, edited by his widow Sonia Orwell with Ian Angus, but not published until 1968, 15 affords a remarkable insight into his concerns and the progression of his ideas. Similarly, much of the abundant critical bibliography on Orwell available at the British Library in London provides clarification about Orwell's life and

interests as well as helping to chart his not-infrequent changes of opinion.

Malcolm Muggeridge, a wartime friend, expresses one of the problems the critic encounters when assessing Orwell's complex literary personality:

The truth is he was by temperament deeply conservative. He loved the past, hated the present and dreaded the future. In this he may well have been right, but it somehow went ill with canvassing on behalf of the Bevanites, and being literary editor of *Tribune*. In his own mind, however, he managed to work it all out, and considered himself the most consistent of beings. ¹⁶

In order to explore the importance of language and freedom in Orwell's fictional writings, attention will be focused on *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, as it is undoubtedly his most influential creation. Furthermore, this novel may be seen as the artistic culmination of Orwell's life, bringing together many ideas present in his previous work. According to Bernard Bergonzi, in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* Orwell "responds intensely to his personal, physical and ideological experiences of the Second World War and its aftermath; but he does so in particular ways which were very personal to him, and which were already implicit in his pre-war writing." Freedom in Orwell, commonly in his essays and journalism and in both his last two novels, *Animal Farm*, and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, is viewed from the point of view of its absence, characterized in the totalitarian State, and totalitarianism will receive much consideration in the present study.

Scholarly opinion in general regards Nineteen Eighty-Four as a dystopian or anti-utopian novel. There is some discussion about which term

is the more appropriate. Clearly, however, there is a marked difference in outlook between the utopian literature of previous centuries and that of the twentieth century. Erich Fromm explains this difference in the following way: "Negative utopias express the mood of powerlessness and hopelessness of modern man just as the early utopias expressed the mood of self-confidence and hope of medieval man." The dystopian precursors which most influenced Orwell's novel, are Huxley's *Brave New World* and Zamyatin's *We*.

The utopian connotations inherent in political correctness find their expression notably in the anxiety for the fate of victim or minority groups by the advocates of PC. A new departure heralded by political correctness was the concept of university syllabi which are designed to be more digestible for minority students and cater for their interests and backgrounds. Previously, syllabi were drawn up with the idea of leading students towards knowledge outside and beyond their own immediate experience. This is linked with issues such as admission quotas, affirmative action, multiculturalism, postmodernism, and the dispute over the literary and historical canon which has led to examination of the work of such names in the fields of philosophy and literary criticism as Harold Bloom, Stanley Fish, Edward Said and John Searle.

Critical studies of PC, given the newness of the phenomenon, are obviously much fewer than those on Orwell, but there has been a vast amount of newspaper space devoted to the topic in recent years. All the books considered relevant published on both sides of the Atlantic up until the end of 1995, specifically on the subject of PC have been consulted. Thanks to the advent of CD-Rom technology all articles on political correctness were scanned

from 1992 until mid-1995 in the *Independent*, *The Times*, the *Sunday Times*, and the *Financial Times*. A diskette -with all the above articles- translated into Word Perfect 5.1 and a printout of the articles from this last newspaper accompanies this dissertation. The *Financial Times* was chosen as representing one of the most prestigious examples of the present-day British daily press, influential because of the detachment it professes.

A mere breakdown of the number of citations in *The Times*, for example, yields intriguing results: in 1992 there were one hundred and twenty-two references to political correctness, in 1993, two hundred and sixty-one, in 1994, three hundred and one, and in 1995, up until 30 March, eighty-one. This reflects the considerable and increasing coverage of PC in that newspaper, and contrasts notably with the coverage offered in the *Financial Times*, which in the same timespans yielded thirty-five, forty-one, fifty-seven, and in the first half of 1995, twenty-nine references.

In itself the attention devoted to PC by *The Times* is interesting, and it is the more so because of the constant complaint on the part of those considered defenders of PC that the whole question has been magnified and vilified by a hostile right-wing press. Accordingly, "the left generally has been underrepresented in public debate. Because of the corporate interests of the large media firms, there has always been a sympathy between the mainstream media and the right, and an exclusion of, if not an active hostility toward, the anticapitalist left". This has been the argument in the United States and it has been transferred to Britain. The idiosyncracies of the language of the media were addressed with particular reference to different newspaper style

guides on both sides of the Atlantic. As will be seen, there is a marked lack of homogeneity in the British and the American approaches to newspaper language and procedure.

Finally, some of the existing works on political correctness show a clear affinity with those on *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, but up to now there has been no in-depth study of the correlation between the two, which is surprising. All we have had so far is a set of allusions, therefore this dissertation seeks to establish a correlation and set of analogies and differences between political correctness and Orwell's views on language as reflected in his fiction and non-fiction. It seeks to show how both are grounded on similar precepts and concerns about the nature of language and its uses and possible manipulation within society. What I attempt to do is to bridge a gap, hitherto little explored, between knowledge of George Orwell's ideas on language and the origins and development of the phenomenon of political correctness in an attempt to evaluate and understand in a better way its role in our contemporary culture.

NOTES

- 1. Robert Hughes, Culture of Complaint: The Fraying of America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 60.
- 2. Barbara Ehrenreich, "The Challenge for the Left", in Paul Berman, (ed.) Debating PC: The Controversy over Political Correctness on College Campuses, (New York: Laurel, 1992), p. 336.
- 3. Jim Neilson, "The Great PC Scare: Tyrannies of the Left, Rhetoric of the Right", in Jeffrey Williams, (ed.) PC Wars: Politics and Theory in the Academy, (New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 79.
- 4. Deborah Cameron, "Words, Words, Words: The Power of Language", in Sarah Dunant, (ed.) *The War of the Words: The Political Correctness Debate*, (London: Virago, 1994), p. 16.
- 5. Deborah Cameron, Verbal Hygiene, (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 8.
- 6. Patricia Aufderheide, (ed.) Beyond PC: Toward a Politics of Understanding, (St Paul, Minn: Graywolf Press, 1993).
- 7. See Sarah Dunant, Op. cit., p. ix.
- 8. Marilyn Friedman and Jan Narveson, *Political Correctness: For and Against* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 1995), p. 110.
- 9. Erika Gottlieb, *The Orwell Comundrum: A Cry of Despair or Faith in the Spirit of Man?* (Ottawa: Carleton Press, 1992), p. 286-287.
- 10. Florence Lewis and Peter Moss, "The Tyranny of Language", in Paul Chilton and Aubrey Crispin, (eds.) Nineteen Eighty-Four in 1984: Autonomy, Control and Communication, (London: Comedia, 1983), p. 54-55.
- 11. New York Times, May 9, 1974.
- 12. Joan Wallach Scott, "The Campaign Against Political Correctness: What's Really at Stake" in Jeffrey Williams, Op. cit., p. 32.
- 13. Jonathan Green, Newspeak, a Dictionary of Jargon. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984), p. ix.
- 14. Edward Sapir, Selected Writings in Language, Culture and Personality, edited by David G. Mandelbaum, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963). Benjamin Lee Whorf, Language, Thought, and Reality: Selected ritings of Benjamin Lee Whorf, edited by John B. Carroll, (Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1956).

- 15. George Orwell, *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters*, edited by Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus, 4 volumes, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1964).
- 16. Malcolm Muggeridge, "A Knight of the Woeful Countenance", in Miriam Gross, (ed.) *The World of George Orwell*, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1971), p. 172.
- 17. Bernard Bergonzi, "Nineteen Eighty-Four and the Literary Imagination", in Dominic Baker-Smith and C.C. Barfoot, (eds.) Between Dream and Nature: Essays on Utopia and Dystopia, (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1987), p. 217.
- 18. Erich Fromm, "Afterword on 1984", in Irving Howe, (ed.) Orwell's Nineteen Eighty-Four: Text, Sources, Criticism, (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1987), p. 206.
- 19. Neilson, Op. cit., p. 73

2. POLITICAL CORRECTNESS

2.i. What is political correctness? Euphemism and political correctness.

In order to fully address the origins and the impact of political correctness this chapter will begin by establishing what euphemism is and what its function is, illustrating the explanation with reference to, and examples from, recent studies on the topic. Hugh Rawson defines euphemism as concealing things such as death, the dead and the supernatural, which people fear most, and covering up those things that remind even the most refined people that they are no different or no better than their less refined fellow human beings. These refer notably to the facts of life, sex, and bodily functions and also include things to do with war. He draws up a binary classification, both positive and negative. Positive euphemisms make the euphemised items appear more important and grander than they really are. An example of euphemisms which magnify or inflate are the extravagant job titles such as custodian for 'janitor' (itself a euphemism for 'caretaker'), coursel for

lawyer, and the many kinds of engineer ('exterminating engineer', 'mattress engineer', 'publicity engineer'). Another example of positive euphemism for job titles is Collins Cobuild Dictionary's escort as the euphemism for a jail guard, and it also has a euphemistic use to denote a prostitute. Such titles have the effect of elevating the job status of the workers and by so doing, of satisfying their ego.

Negative euphemisms, on the contrary, deflate and diminish. Their function is to offset the power of tabooed terms. Therefore they are defensive, eliminating from the language things people are reluctant to refer to directly. Rawson gives the examples of *help* for servant (itself an old euphemism for slave), *hooker* and *working girl* for whore.

Negative, defensive euphemisms stretch back to the most ancient times. The Greeks transformed the Furies into the Eumenides (the Kindly Ones). Many cultures forbid the enunciation of the name of God (pious Jews say Adonai), or of Satan. Of the multiple euphemisms for Satan we can enumerate the deuce, the good man, the great fellow, and the generalized Devil, among others. In these cases there appears to be a confusion between the names of things and the things themselves. Accordingly, the name is viewed as an extension of the thing, and to know the name is to give one power over the thing. But such power may be dangerous: "Speak of the Devil and he appears." In order to counteract this possible danger, the safest policy is to use another name in place of the supernatural being's name, which will usually be flattering and euphemistic.

All euphemisms, whether positive or negative, may be used either

unconsciously or consciously. Unconscious euphemisms consist mainly of words that were developed as euphemisms, but so long ago that hardly anyone remembers the original reason for their euphemisation. Examples in this category include such now-standard terms as cemetery (from the Greek word for "sleeping place"; it replaced the more deathly "graveyard"), and the names of various barnyard animals, including the donkey (the erstwhile "ass"), the sire (or studhorse) and the rooster (for cock, and one of the many similar evasions, e.g., haystack for haycock, weather vane for weathercock). The term drumstick as used of a chicken or any fowl to be eaten harks back to the time when mentioning the word "leg" was considered indelicate, and the legs of furniture were covered with cloth so as not to give offence. In American usage this taboo extends to the breast of the bird, which is called "white meat" while the leg is referred to as "dark meat".

Conscious euphemisms, however, are much more complex, because they can form a type of code. While they may well be used honestly, they have an essentially duplicitous nature because they stand for "something else" and everyone pretends that the "something else" does not exist. Not surprisingly, people and institutions with something to hide, or who do not wish to reveal what they are thinking, or who find it expedient to lie about what they are doing, resort to euphemisms with alacrity.

Rawson classifies the kind of euphemisms used by agencies and services such as the CIA and the FBI and by the Pentagon as "dishonest euphemisms".² In this case the speakers and writers are not attempting to avoid giving offence but are aiming to deceive. So murder becomes executive action, an illegal

break-in, a black bag job, and napalm is soft or selective ordnance. These are the kinds of euphemism so prevalent in the fields of advertising, where small becomes medium if not large, and politics, where serious errors are passed off as misspeaking and lies that can no longer be explained away are called inoperative. No doubt this same phenomenon occurs in most languages; certainly we have evidence in Spanish with, for example, un error de política informativa used to stand for a lie, be it justifiable or not, or flexibilización del trabajo, the equivalent of what in English has become downsizing, in other words, sacking workers in order to suit the make a company more profitable. The two-fold danger here is that not only is the receiver of the message deceived, but also the user. John W. Dean III, one of the protagonists in the Watergate affair, expressed the dilemma in the following terms:

If... Richard Nixon had said to me, 'John, I want you to do a little crime for me. I want you to obstruct justice,' I would have told him he was crazy and disappeared from sight. No one thought about the Watergate coverup in those terms _ at first, anyway. Rather, it was 'containing' Watergate or keeping the defendants 'on the reservation' or coming up with the right public relations 'scenario' and the like.³

Rawson quotes the circumlocutions and euphemisms of the Senate Intelligence Committee in 1975 after its investigation of American plots to kill foreign leaders:

'Assassinate', 'murder,' and 'kill' are words many people do

not want to speak or hear. They describe acts which should not even be proposed, let alone plotted. Failing to call dirty business by its rightful name may have increased the risk of dirty business being done.⁴

President Nixon's term of office in the White House furnished especially abundant material for the study of euphemisms. Many terms used in the famous taped conversations and in internal memos originated in the underworld, e.g. caper and covert operation (burglary), launder (cleaning dirty money), neutralize (murder or, as used in the White House of that time, character assassination) and plausible denial (official lying).

Rawson draws a curious analogy between the creation and disappearance of euphemisms and two rules of monetary theory from which Gresham's law originates.⁵ In the first place this law asserts that "bad money drives out good" and holds that debased or underweight coins will drive good, full-weight coins out of circulation. With language we can see how this same principle applies, with "bad" meanings or associations tending to drive rival "good" meanings out of circulation. For example, coition, copulation, and intercourse were once general terms for, respectively, coming together, coupling, and communication. After they were incorporated into the language as euphemisms, their sexual meanings became dominant to such a degree that the original senses are virtually unknown nowadays and are only found as such in very special circumstances. In a similar fashion the PC connotation of the word "gay" for a homosexual is the only one that corresponds to current usage, although according to Nash, during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth

centuries, gay in vulgar usage meant "libidinous", "sexually active", while its original meaning of "lively" and "enjoyable" is now considered old-fashioned.

The second principle of Gresham's Law is the Law of Succession. After a euphemism becomes tainted by association with its underlying "bad" meaning, people will tend to eschew it. An example of this is the word occupy which was taboo in polite society for the greater part of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries because of its euphemistic use for engaging in sex. (A man might be said to occupy his wife or to go to an occupying house.) Once a term has begun to be shunned it is usually necessary to develop a new euphemism to replace the one that has failed. This in turn will become tainted and another one will appear in its place, which is how chains of euphemisms evolve. Thus, "mad" has been euphemised successively as crazy, insane, lunatic, mentally deranged, and mental. Poor and backward nations have gone from underdeveloped to developing and then on to emergent countries.

Neaman and Silver posit five different linguistic devices which contribute to the formation of euphemisms.

- 1. Borrowing words from other languages. An example is the use of dom or don for a mafia leader, and so, the don.
- "Widening"- when a specific term becomes too painful or vivid, we move up the ladder of abstraction. In this way, cancer becomes a growth.
- 3. "Semantic shift"- allied to the phenomenon of widening. This involves the substitution of the whole, or a similar generality, for the specific part we do not choose to mention. Examples of this are *rear end* for buttocks,

or to sleep with, to go to bed with for sexual relations.

- 4. "Metaphorical transfer"- the comparison of things of one order to things of another. The euphemism blossom for a "pimple" compares one flowering to another more acceptable variety.
 - 5. "Phonetic distortion". In this category we may find:
 - abbreviation- Ladies for Ladies' Room.
 - apocopation- Vamp for vampire but used in the sense of a seductive woman.
- initializing -the use of acronyms instead of their component parts
 J C for Jesus Christ, yuppie for Young Urban Professional, OAP for Old Age

 Pensioner.
- backforming- the substitution of one part of speech for another- burgle derived from burglar.
 - reduplication- the repetition of a syllable or letter of a word- pee-pee for piss. This is especially common in children's bathroom language.
 - phonetic distortion- the changing of a sound in a word- cripes for Christ.
 - elevation- penthouse is an elevated form of "pentice" which means a lean-to shack.
 - degradation- "uncouth" in the fourteenth century meant "unknown".

 It later took on the meanings of "crass", "crude", and "vulgar" because anyone who was aristocratic was obviously well known. Today it is a severe insult.8

Words from foreign languages sound finer, and in English there is a

predominance of French and Latin borrowings that are "regarded as printable and even broadcastable by people... who become exercised at the sight and sound of their English counterparts". In this category are such words and expressions as affair, liaison, brassiere, lingerie, French letter, French disease, (syphilis); and copulation, fellatio, masturbation from the Latin root.

Another way of euphemising is to abbreviate words and expressions by means of some of the letters as in s.o.b. or the dash in f---. Everyone knows what letters have been deleted but no one feels seriously offended since the taboo word or expression has not been exhibited with its full force. We can see that abbreviations like this "function in many fields such as the child's BM (bottom), the advertiser's BO (body odour), the hypochondriac's Big C (cancer), and the different shortenings for offbeat sex, such as AC/DC, for those who swing both ways, bd for bondage and discipline, and S/M for sadomasochism". 10

The impact of certain taboos may be mitigated by uttering concepts in the most general of terms possible. Furthermore, abstractions, because they are quite opaque to the uninformed eye (and also meaningless to the untrained ear) provide excellent cover-up words. This is frequently achieved by merely finding the lowest common denominator. Rawson cites bureaucrats, engineers, scientists, and "those who like to be regarded as scientists" as "particularly good at generalizing details out of existence."

They are responsible for such expressions as aerodynamic personal decelerator for a parachute, energy release for radiation release (as from a nuclear reactor), episode and event for disasters of different sorts and sizes, impact attenuation device for a crash

cushion, and Vertical Transportation Corps for a group of elevator operators.

It is worth noting, however, that these kinds of neologisms are much more a feature of American English than of the British variety. Moreover, it is not uncommon to find similar American euphemisms treated with some derision in British circles, particularly by those anxious to emphasize the differences between both usages, often to denigrate the American one. As Simon Hoggart observes, "a phrase such as 'motorized transportation module' for 'school bus' would sound simply absurd in British parlance". 12

Another way not to allude to topics or terms that are too sensitive to be dealt with openly, is to mention only one aspect of the subject, a circumstance involving it, a related subject, or even by saying what it is not. To be indirect is better than to be direct. The examples cited by Rawson of assembly center and break off contact with the enemy as indirect euphemisms for "prison" and "retreat" respectively, are again more likely to occur in an American context.

Euphemisms are by definition mild, agreeable circumlocutions, whose real meanings are always worse than their apparent ones. Understatement reduces risk and has the added advantage that the full extent of the unpleasantness of a situation will probably not be immediately obvious to the uninitiated. This is particularly true in those constructions that acknowledge part of the truth but conceal the whole dimension of its harshness. A nuclear reactor which is admitted to be above critical is actually out of control, active defence is attack, and area bombing is terror bombing. The same principle applies to euphemisms such as companion, partner, and roommate, which all attenuate "lover"; similarly pro-choice for "abortion" and senior citizens for old

persons, who in any case are now termed elderly. Euphemists often erect signposts in front of the euphemistic term, thereby ensuring that even the most uninitiated "get the message", for example, criminal conversation (a legalism for adultery) and meaningful relationship. This device is common in obituary columns which in Britain almost constitute a sub-genre of their own. In writing of this kind, where it would normally be considered tasteless to openly state the homosexuality of the person whose character and achievements are being eulogized, reference to a close personal friend, or constant companion indicates to the readers the existence of a lover of the same sex.

As a general rule, the longer the euphemism the better. One exception to this rule is hit for murder, but overwhelmingly euphemisms are longer than the words they replace either because they have more letters or more syllables or two or more words are used in place of a single one. One reason for this is because the tabooed Anglo-Saxon words tend to be short, but another is because almost always more words are required to evade an idea than to state it directly and honestly. Once more, chiefly in America, one can find that advertisers consider medication gives faster relief than "medicine"; writers of financial reports shun "drop" and prefer adjustment downward while business enterprises do not "fire" or "sack" employees, but elect to downsize or even rightsize their companies.

In a collection of essays published in Britain during the mid-eighties and entitled Fair Speech: The Uses of Euphemism, its editor goes back to Orwell's Nineteen Eighty-Four for a forerunner of the contemporary trends euphemism was following:

Inevitably much of this book is given to dysphemism, and much to the other great and concurrent phenomenon of our time: the shift of 'genuine' euphemism into the public sphere, political, military, commercial and social, where it can do much more certain harm than it ever did in the largely private realms of sex, bowel movements, menstruation, money, sickness and natural deaths. This is the world of black lies, of Newspeak (for Orwell's appendix on the subject has turned out the most truly prophetic part of Nineteen Eighty-Four), or -in the putting of a good face on things, the cosmetology of advertising- of grey ones. (Italics added.)¹³

Clearly, this opinion is of interest for our hypothesis and not only because of its evaluation of the importance of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Our interest at this point lies chiefly in the words "can do much more certain harm" as here we have a foretaste of the fear which will be constantly invoked and reiterated by opponents of political correctness.

An essay in this same collection examines the use of euphemism in politics in which one of the conclusions is that "euphemism occurs less in British politics than one might imagine. Abuse of the language is, of course, as common in Westminster as it is in any other national legislature, but more often it takes the form of hyperbole, evasion, vagueness and plain untruth." The author argues that since politicians avoid displeasing almost all groups of people whenever possible, they are usually only too ready to agree on euphemistic terms for problematic issues, and goes on: "Thus 'Jews' is thought too harsh and even anti-Semitic. Politicians prefer to say 'members of the Jewish community'. 'Community' is no doubt supposed to soften the blunt

'Jew' and implies an identity of political and social interest which might not always exist." The use of the word "poor" by politicians is similarly illustrative. Nobody is 'poor' in Britain any longer to judge from political speeches. The word has been replaced by the euphemistic 'deprived', 'underprivileged', and 'disadvantaged'. Hoggart notes how it began to reappear as a dysphemism, as in the headline "Thatcher's New Poor" to an article attacking Tory economic policies. In his view such a headline "evokes politically useful memories of the poorhouse and the Poor Laws." 16

Hoggart also remarks upon word coinage by what he calls the "new Left" and presages a politically correct term when he refers to 'heterosexism.' It means 'being prejudiced against homosexuals', a state of mind which "of course is opposed by almost all members of the new Left". He emphasizes how the use of the "long-winded neologism" (instead of 'hating gays' for example) gives status not to the prejudice, but to those who attack it. He contends that the word is simultaneously euphemism and dysphemism when "instead of saying 'the trouble with you is you're prejudiced against homosexuals', which is merely a critical observation, you can spit 'heterosexist!', an instant condemnation."

Euphemism & Dysphemism: Language Used As Shield and Weapon by Keith Allan and Kate Burridge, a study published in Britain in 1991, begins by defining euphemism as being "characterised by avoidance language and evasive expression." The authors discuss what they mean by this, echoing part of the book's title. According to them a speaker uses words as a protective shield against the anger or disapproval of natural or supernatural beings, and they

furnish an alternative description of euphemism as "expression that seeks to avoid being offensive." They typify dysphemism as roughly the contrary of euphemism.

Where Allan and Burridge differ from their predecessors is in their assertion that "euphemism and dysphemism are not merely a response to taboo: they also function where Speaker avoids using, or, on the contrary, deliberately decides to use, a distasteful expression and/or an infelicitous style of addressing or naming." As they themselves state, this attitude is not that of the sociologist, the anthropologist or the psychologist. Their approach is that of the linguist taking account as it does of Speech Act Theory and its allied Politeness Theory.

They also trace back to the late 1960s the time when the feminist movement began to raise objections to a community attitude that valued women less highly than men. This attitude, which clearly devalued women, was perceived by feminists to be an attitude reflected in language. In order to make this language less dysphemistic, people in the movement attempted to change at least public language. They therefore subscribed to the theory and indeed continue to subscribe to it, that revising habits of language use will change community attitudes.²¹ The authors are not concerned with the credibility of this belief, but emphasize the large number of guidelines for nonsexist language usage in private and public institutions, and also in government offices, which have been issued since the 1970s.

They cite two of the most recent publications that appeared before the issue of their book. They are, Style Manual for Authors, Editors and Printers

(4th edition) Australian Government Publishing Service (1988) and Language, Gender, and Professional Writing: Theoretical Approaches and Guidelines for Nonsexist Usage, produced by the Commission on the Status of Women in the Profession, edited by Frank & Treichler, and published by the Modern Language Association of America in 1989. The latter, they state, like many publications with the same aims, distinguishes dysphemistic expressions and claims to offer neutral alternatives. The authors' position on the question of neutrality in euphemistic expressions is expressed in terms which overtly avoid entering the fray of discord the subject provokes:

Given our definitions, they might be judged neutral locutions in what, for many users at the present time, are euphemistic illocutions. Discussing such a politically and emotionally charged quibble at this time will generate more heat than light, and we leave it to readers to make up their own minds. Speakers and writers are advised to choose the neutral alternative from such lists as the following:

Dysphemistic locution Neutral locution

man(kind) human beings, humanity, people

chairman chairperson, chair

congressman member of Congress, representative

fireman firefighter

policeman police officer

mailman mail carrier

foreman supervisor

salesman salesperson

actress actor

(air)stewardess flight attendant²²

These lists are instantly recognisable as examples of what many term "politically correct" usage. The authors proceed to analyse the implications of the two categories, regarding as obvious that the *-man* locutions are not dysphemistic when applied to a male, and that the neutral one is essentially intended to name the job. In this way the possibility of such an office being held by a woman is tacitly acknowledged. In their discussion of whether the suffix *-ess* and others such as *lady/woman doctor* are considered acceptable, Allan and Burridge conclude that, contrary to what might be believed, "it is widely perceived that women referred to using such terms are less highly valued than their male counterparts, therefore the terms are dysphemistic and the neutral alternatives are preferred for a female denotatum." Furthermore, since neutral terms are preferred in nonreferential contexts (where there is no explicit allusion to gender), "it follows that many speakers prefer to use the neutral term all the time, even when denoting males; thus does the neutral term become truly neutral."

From their standpoint as linguists, the authors are concerned not to appear to be prejudiced, and posit a probable linguistic development which would defuse the tension the debate over these terms is causing. They suggest that "women who do not find titles like *chairman* dysphemistic should not be dismissed as unreconstructed nerds, brainwashed by outdated social attitudes; as time passes, the semantic feature "male" could well be bleached out of the -man suffix." Nevertheless, they concede that, as this has not yet occurred, "it is perfectly legitimate for other women to feel affronted and wrongfully excluded by such compounds."²⁴

Guides to nonsexist usage recommend the adoption of parallel address forms for women and men when used in the same context. Allan and Burridge believe that when the particular preferences of the individuals concerned are not known, introducing a couple as *Dr* and *Mrs*. John Doe might not cause offense to the woman named in this way, but that the number of women who do not wish to be named like an appendage to their husband is increasing. They give this as one of the reasons which explains why women decide not to adopt their husbands' surnames.

Since feminists and feminist thinking accounts for a sizeable portion of PC terminology, Cameron's insight into the problem is revealing. She addresses the reactions of both advocates of political correctness and its critics on the issue of nonsexist terminology. In her view the root of the problem is the "politicising of people's words against their will":

They are genuinely bewildered that women or members of minority groups should persist in reading bizarre connotations into perfectly innocent words whose meanings should surely be transparent to anyone, since they are simply facts of the language. To which the women etc., are likely to retort: 'On the contrary, they are *artefacts* of your historical power to define words for everyone.'²⁵

The discussion of euphemism referring to texts in a chronological fashion from the early eighties into the nineties has inevitably brought us to problems which in this decade are addressed bearing in mind the issue of PC. In a much quoted book which will be discussed further, the spirit of the times

of political correctness is described as follows: "We have entered a period of intolerance which combines, as it sometimes does in America, with a sugary taste for euphemism."²⁶

It is opportune at this point to examine the origins of political correctness in more detail and to scrutinize the debate it has provoked both in America and in Britain. Berman notes that the term 'politically correct' was "originally an approving phrase on the Leninist left to denote someone who steadfastly toed the party line" and that it subsequently became an epithet when "it evolved into 'P.C.,' an ironic phrase among wised-up leftists to denote someone whose line-toeing fervor was too much to bear." On the other hand, Michael Bérubé considers that "the phrase 'political correctness' was indeterminate from the start." Sarah Dunant defines the origins of PC in her introduction to a collection of essays and points to aspects which provoked argument:

The phenomenon of political correctness as it is defined today grew out of the American campuses in the mid-to-late 1980s. Focused largely on the arts and humanities faculties, it was an attempt to open up the literary canon to include the work of more non-white and women writers, to rethink the ways in which history was taught and to promote sexual and racial equality by means of certain kinds of positive discrimination and, in some cases, speech and behaviour codes on campus. With its overtones of enfercing tolerance and prescribing behaviour it was perhaps inevitable that PC should lead to such absurdities as the Antioch College code of sexual behaviour which insisted on verbal agreement before any and every stage

of sexual courtship, and to accusations that Andrew Marvell's ode 'To his Coy Mistress' was simply a sophisticated piece of sexual harassment.²⁹

As will be seen, it is precisely those "absurdities" which have given rise to the heated debate conducted primarily in the media, but Dunant, whose stance in the introduction to a collection of essays aspires to be neutral, acknowledges the undercurrent of enforcement and prescription in the political correctness movement. A dictionary which subtitles itself the definitive guide to (post-) modern culture gives its version of the origins of PC and serves to exemplify some of the problems posed, and the tenor of language often used in the PC debate:

The so-called Political Correctness movement was a phenomenon that first appeared on North American campuses in the late 1980s. Taking its name from a phrase used in prescriptive authoritarian regimes (notably the People's Republic of China during the Maoist era), the tendency combined Feminism, anti-racist and other liberationist doctrines to create a new post-Marxist leftist orthodoxy. The beginnings of PC go back to the work of the Post Structuralists, in particular the Deconstruction of Jacques Derrida, which during the 1970s took a firm hold in many university departments in the US, where the application of these ideas to literature was later extended to subjects such as history and anthropology. One of the notions contained in Deconstruction and the provocative ideas of the psychologist Michel Foucault, is that cultural messages are not free of ideology, assumptions of power relationships or the reinforcement of orthodoxies, all of which are expressed unwittingly through choice of language. Feminists, for instance,

had already begun to identify the sexism inherent in language in the early 1970s, and by the end of that decade many supposedly masculinist terms -those ending in -man for example- were tabor.

Political correctness extended this taboo to cover terms reinforcing racial or heterosexist stereotypes, Euro-centrism in historical studies or discrimination against the physically or mentally disadvantaged. In this controversy of euphemisms, 'handicapped' became 'disadvantaged', which in turn was rejected as discriminatory in favour of 'differently abled' or 'challenged'. It was this nominalist purification of the lexicon that attracted most attention internationally, but PC also attacked the teaching of the 'Canon', the body of learning that bolstered a system designed by and for 'DWEMs' -Dead White European Males.³⁰

It is clear from the above that Thorne equates the use of PC terminology vith euphemism, and his examples of the incorporation of fresh terms that supersede others previously considered 'politically correct' take us back to Gresham's law discussed on page 20. Furthermore, Thorne alludes indirectly to the prescriptive nature of the PC movement, which is consistently condemned by its critics, by tracing its origins to authoritarian systems of government.

Apart from the ideological discrepancies over the different issues covered by political correctness, as Eugene Goodheart notes, there is charge and countercharge based on anecdotal evidence. He rightly considers these to be the least fruitful debates about political correctness: "The debate degenerates into bickering about the nature of the evidence and whether the evidence is

marginal or central."³¹ He observes that it is 'politically correct' to say that 'political correctness' is an invention of conservatives, or a self-ironizing device of the sophisticated left, or the excess of extremists, and hence a marginal phenomenon: "It is not true that conservatives have invented the term, though they have gleefully pounced upon it in order to insinuate its Stalinist implications."³²

An added difficulty is one of a semantic nature. Stuart Hall refers to PC's "confrontational, in-your-face mode of address." Furthermore as it is not at all uncommon to find opinions couched in terms similar to: "PC is, a form of groupthink fueled by paranoia and demonology and imposed by political or social intimidation", it can readily be appreciated that there is a problem of register, for the language used is highly charged and loaded. This kind of language characterises both sides of the debate. As Dunant puts it:

The problem with all this hysteria is that it is not only open to the same charge levelled at PC itself -that of the misuse of language (to call PC warriors Red Guards or Hitler Youth is simply inaccurate and misleading)- but that it makes any kind of genuine debate about the pros and cons of what political correctness is, and stands for, almost impossible.³⁵

This in turn leads to another unfortunate consequence of the political correctness debate whereby the way one expresses oneself or the terminology one uses in a very real sense marks one out as a defendant or proponent of PC. In other words our choice of language has become a politicised issue, and this is undoubtedly one of the major changes political correctness has effected on

present-day language use:

Despite the apocalyptic claims of the anti-PC lobby, empirical investigation suggests that linguistic militants have not succeeded in imposing their terms on everyone. What they have brilliantly succeeded in doing, though, is in some ways even more threatening. Meaning works by contrast: the words you choose acquire force from an implicit comparison with ones you could have chosen, but did not. By coining alternatives to traditional usage, therefore, the radicals have effectively politicised all the terms. They have made it impossible for anyone to speak or write without appearing to take up a political position, for which they can then be held accountable. Thus if I say, 'Ms X is the chair of Y' I convey one political standpoint; if I say 'Miss X is the chairman of Y' I convey another. What I cannot do any more is say either of these things and hope to convey by it only 'a certain woman holds a certain office in a certain organisation. '36

Cameron's opinion is important, as she is one of the relatively few writers on the subject of political correctness who does not appear to start from an *a priori* stance, and who attempts to address the question in a balanced way. However, it cannot be denied that PC is often perceived as paradoxical, evidenced by a phrase such as this: "at core it is an attempt to institutionalize virtue, a way of legislating enlightenment." Another paradoxical element is aptly identified by Dunant when she explains that "for many liberals a movement which claimed to be about opening up the culture to allow more voices in has, instead, only succeeded in alienating voices that were already there." She thus suggests that many who in principle would be in sympathy

with PC have become alienated by it. Ehrenreich has similar qualms: "I worry about the paralysis of the P.C. subculture on some campuses, and its unattractiveness to potential radicals. I've seen former high school radicals get turned off by the P.C. environment on some college campuses. Why would you want to join a group just to be criticized and 'corrected'?" Dunant's view is valuable both intrinsically and because of the tone of moderation in which it is expressed, that contrasts with the stridency of too much of the PC debate. She goes on to pose several questions which she finds problematic about political correctness:

What price more women and black writers in the canon if that means the exclusion of other equally brilliant and historically important white male ones? What price racial and sexual equality if it can only be achieved by the imposition of another set of rules, in some cases amounting to what many see as a direct censorship of speech or behaviour? You don't achieve freedom by being frightened of what you can and can't say. That way lies intolerance, rather than the opposite.⁴⁰

Hence Dunant is pointing to what she sees as an essential contradiction of the path the PC movement is treading, perceiving as she does a prescriptive and authoritarian bent, albeit in the name of equal rights and the protection and enhancement of the underdog. Yet this version of intolerance as the result of PC is challenged by Cameron who insists that 'politically correct' language, far from threatening our freedom to speak as we choose, within the limits imposed by any form of social and public interaction, "threatens only our freedom to imagine that our linguistic choices are inconsequential, or to suppose that any

one group of people has an unalienable right to prescribe them "41

As has been seen, the concept of an 'apolitical' attitude is rejected by defenders of PC who regard neutrality on any topic as wishful thinking or lack of introspection. This is a central tenet to their position, and they discount the existence of a neutral standpoint. As Diane Ravitch points out, political correctness believes that any system or selection process or test will always be biased to favour those who are in power. A more moderate attitude is again that of Cameron. She invokes the Orwell of Politics and the English Language and she terms Orwellians those who, conservatives and liberals alike, defend "the kind of language that 'tells it like it is': plain, clear, concise, unclouded by impenetrable jargon and circumlocution, mind-numbing cliché or emotive value-laden terms."42 She considers that these Orwellians often overlook the difficulty in many cases of finding a neutral term that corresponds to some purported "euphemism". She contests the position exemplified by Hughes, who "appears to be suggesting that whereas physically challenged is a ludicrous attempt to gloss over the true condition of the person in the wheelchair, cripple would be a perfectly neutral description." Her judgement on this term is that "cripple had already been consigned to the realms of playground abuse when [Cameron] started school 30 years ago."43

The opposite contention put forward by those who challenge PC language is that the way one refers to certain facts of life or to certain people does not change one's essential opinions about them, nor, as Hughes argues, does it actually make people treat one another with more civility and understanding. He cites the case of how seventy years ago, in polite white

usage, blacks were called "coloured people"; then they became "negroes"; then "blacks"; now "African Americans" or "persons of colour" again. The reason why Hughes -and here he is surely not alone- rejects the succession of socially sanctioned terms is because he believes that:

[...] for millions of white Americans, from the time of George Wallace to that of David Duke, they stayed niggers, and the shift of names has not altered the facts of racism, any more than the ritual announcement of Five-Year Plans and Great Leaps Forward turned the social disasters of Stalinism and Maoism into triumphs.⁴⁴

He diagnoses the "notion that you change a situation by finding a newer and nicer word for it" as emerging from the "old American habit of euphemism, circumlocution, and desperate confusion about etiquette, produced by fear that the concrete will give offence." The title of this key book is Culture of Complaint and while Hughes attacks equally the populist demagogy of conservatives such as Pat Buchanan, Jesse Helms and Ronald Reagan, his contention as contained in the subtitle The Fraying of America is clearly that the PC debate is a deeply divisive factor in American society. Whether one agrees or not with many affirmations in the book, it would seem that this division is an undoubted fact. We have examined the tenets of Cameron and Dunant, and indeed it must be said that overt critics of political correctness, together with those who claim non-alignment, are consigned to the camp of the opposition. William Phillips claims that the middle ground simply does not exist for advocates of PC.46 Furthermore, with the possibility of objectivity

being rejected, subjectivity is not considered a fault, but in many cases a virtue. This is abundantly obvious when the PC position over the literary canon is considered. The existence and adherence to the literary canon are contested and students moreover are encouraged to pursue the study of topics with which they are familiar and to give their *personal* reactions to the texts they read.

Bérubé, writing from an avowedly liberal standpoint, professes to attempt to describe the relations between literary theory and American cultural politics in the 1990s in a book entitled *Public Access: Literary Theory and American Cultural Politics*. He attributes the most problematic aspect of the term "political correctness" to the fact that its continued use gives American conservatives a monopoly over the discussion of cultural values by casting liberalism as doubly *void* of values, at once relativist and totalitarian:

In other words, liberals and leftists don't have "values"; instead of values, we have PC. The right has values. The consequences of this rhetorical sleight of nand can be quite serious insofar as they help shape the terrain of public deliberation and public policy. Professing 'family values', for instance, does not mean being concerned that one in five American children are born into poverty; it means supporting anti-gay rights ordinances and opposing 'family leave' policies. Likewise, believing in 'traditional' values is no barrier to defunding battered women's shelters, shredding the Constitution in order to fund *contras* in Nicaragua, or advocating -as did William Bennett during his term as drug czar- the beheading of drug dealers.⁴⁷

Bérubé's words underline the essentially demagogic aspect which the PC debate adopts through the manipulation of words which convey a marked emotive content. He is contrasting fundamental attitudes to controversial issues in American society, and this polarization of positions mirrors that very society. Political correctness is the visible manifestation, in behaviour, and the visible expression, in language, of deep underlying difficulties besetting conduct and action in a fast changing and ever differing plural community.

NOTES

- 1. Hugh Rawson, A Dictionary of Euphemisms and Other Doubletalk, (London: Macdonald, 1981).
- 2. Op. cit., p. 3.
- 3. New York Times, June 4, 1975.
- 4. Rawson, Op. cit., p. 17.
- 5. Op. cit., p. 17.
- 6. Walter Nash, Jargon: Its Uses and Abuses, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993).
- 7. Rawson, Op. cit., p. 5.
- 8. Judith S. Neaman and Carole G. Silver, Kind Words: A Thesaurus of Euphemisms, (New York: Facts on File Publications, 1993), p. 15.
- 9. Rawson, Op. cit., p. 8.
- 10. Op. cit, p. 9.
- 11. Ibid., p. 9.
- 12. Simon Hoggart, "Politics" in D. J. Enright, Fair Speech: The Uses of Euphemism (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 178.
- 13. Op. cit., p. 3.
- 14. Hoggart, Op. cit., p. 174.
- 15. Op. cit., p. 176.
- 16. Ibid., p. 176.
- 17. Ibid., p. 177.
- 18. Keith Allan and Kate Burridge, Euphemism and Dysphemism: Language Used as Shield and Weapon (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 1.
- 19. Cp. cit., p. 1.
- 20. Ibid., p. 1.

- 21. See Allan and Burridge, Op. cit., p. 43-44.
- 22. Op. cit, p. 44.
- 23. Ibid., p. 44.
- 24. Ibid., p. 45.
- 25. Deborah Cameron, "Words, Words, Words", in Sarah Dunant, (ed.) (London: Virago, 1994), p. 32.
- 26. Robert Hughes, Culture of Complaint: The Fraying of America, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 14.
- 27. Paul Berman, (ed.) Debating PC.: The Controversy Over Political Correctness on College Campuses (New York: Dell, 1992), p. 5.
- 28. Michael Bérubé, Public Access: Literary Theory and American Cultural Politics (London: Verso, 1994), p. 5.
- 29. Sarah Dunant, Op. cit., p. viii-ix.
- 30. Tony Thorne, Fads, Fashions and Cults: From Acid House to Zoot Suit via Existentialism and Political Correctness the definitive guide to (post-) modern culture, (London: Bloomsbury, 1993), p. 188-189.
- 31. Eugene Goodheart, "PC or Not PC", Partisan Review, Vol. 60, No 4, Fall 1993, p. 552.
- 32. Op. cit., p. 551.
- 33. Stuart Hall, "Some 'Politically Incorrect' Pathways Through PC", in Dunant, Op. cit., p. 168.
- 34. Morris Dickstein, "Correcting PC", *Partisan Review*, vol no. 24, 1993, p. 543.
- 35. Dunant, Op. cit., p. viii.
- 36. Cameron, Op. cit., p. 31-32.
- 37. Dickstein, Op. cit., p. 544.
- 38. Dunant, Op. cit., p. xi.
- 39. Barbara Ehrenreich, "The Challenge for the Left", in Paul Berman, (ed.) Debating PC: The Controversy over Political Correctness on College Campuses, (New York: Laurel, 1992), p. 336.
- 40. Dunant, Op. cit., p. xi-xii.

- 41. Cameron, Op. cit., p. 33.
- 42. Op. cit., p. 27.
- 43. Ibid., p. 27.
- 44. Hughes, Op. cit., p. 20.
- 45. Op. cit., p. 20.
- 46. William Phillips, "Against Political Correctness: Eleven Points", Partisan Review, vol. 60, Fall 1993.
- 47. Bérubé, Op. cit., p. x.



2.ii. Political correctness - language, thought and reality

Before investigating the events that have surrounded PC and Orwell's prediction in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, some attention should be given to the question of the influence of thought on language and vice versa, since, were it not for the complexity and the interrelations between the two, the debate over political correctness would not have assumed the proportions it has. Similarly, PC would not have been attributed with the power, negative or positive, that so many either decry or acclaim. The theoretical fundamentals of this debate which can help us place our discussion in perspective are as follows.

Stuart Chase explains how the Greeks took it for granted that all men, or at least all thinkers shared "a universal, uncontaminated essence of reason", which was the background of all languages. According to this belief, words, were simply "the medium in which this deeper effulgence found expression." As Chase points out, the consequence of such reasoning is that "thought expressed in any language could be translated without loss of meaning into any other language." This opinion remained unchanged for 2500 years, and in

view of this Chase considers Whorf's contribution to the field so important, since Whorf "flatly challenges" this received view in his second major hypothesis. Whorf believed that a change in language "can transform our appreciation of the Cosmos." Chase's views on language were known to George Orwell, who characteristically derived a political message from them:

Stuart Chase and others have come near to claiming that all abstract words are meaningless, and have used this as a pretext for advocating a kind of political quietism. Since you don't know what Fascism is, how can you struggle against Fascism? One need not swallow such absurdities as this, but one ought to recognize that the present political chaos is connected with the decay of language, and that one can probably bring about some improvement by beginning at the verbal end.³

Despite the revolutionary nature of Whorf's hypotheses, he was also a continuer in a line of enquiry which began with Franz Boas and was followed by Edward Sapir, at one time a teacher of Whorf's. As John Lacy establishes, Boas's conclusions about the nature of language were a vital contribution to the eventual development of the view that language plays a role in shaping thought. Boas formulated three basic arguments: first, "that languages classify experience"; second, "different languages classify experience differently"; and third, "linguistic phenomena are unconscious in character, apparently because of their highly automatic production." Boas had observed that linguistic classifications "reflect but do not dictate thought", and by "thought" he was referring to "the conceptual ideas and forms of thinking characteristic of a culture." Lacy considers that although Boas was not usually systematic or

even explicit about his ideas on the relation of language and thought, in general, he appears to conclude that "language categories directly reflect (or express) ideas and hence linguistic data can be used to study those ideas." ⁶

Sapir, on the other hand, while starting from Boas's considerations, to all effects reversed Boas's conclusions that linguistic classifications reflect thought, arguing instead that organized linguistic classifications direct thought. He viewed thought as issuing from language, and considered that it is only through language that human beings can arrive at fully conceptual thought. Lacy encapsulates Sapir's claims: "we anticipate (or read) experience in terms of language categories which, by virtue of their abstraction and elaboration in the linguistic process, no longer correspond to experience in a direct way."

The conclusions to be grawn from the observations of both Boas and Sapir are that the differences among languages do not reside simply in the content of the individual classifications themselves, but also, among other factors, in their systematic formal arrangement. However, for Boas, language essentially reflects thought and culture, but only rarely directly influences them, whereas Sapir "began to see in language a powerful shaping factor because of the impact of using this creative symbolic tool in the interpretation of experience." Sapir, as has already been stated, believed that the use of this tool transforms and, in part, constitutes conceptual thought. Yet, on the question of culture, Sapir, was less emphatic, for while he "recognized the logical plausibility of the influence of language on culture via its influence on thought, he felt the evidence on this issue was negative." However, as Lacy points out, in his later writings "certain reconceptualizations of thought and

culture emerged which pointed toward a notion of culture involving shared symbolic understandings, which of necessity depend largely on a linguistic base. *11

An example of Lacy's point can be found in Miguel Martínez's perception of the significance of "language as ideology" or as a "control tool". He suggests that when we talk about these two concepts of language we do more than merely acknowledge the fact that human languages in a certain manner characterize specific views or theories about reality. They are, in fact, pinpointing an attempt to effect a separation of "reality" from its linguistic representation. Martínez equates this with "the perverse relationship between language and reality, shown by the kind of reasoning Winston Smith uses", cited from Bob Hodge and Roger Fowler.¹²

In effect, both Boas and Sapir demonstrated that different languages symbolize separate classifications of experience which may vary to a great degree, and in so doing, paved the way for the concept of linguistic relativity. Nonetheless, they placed different emphases on the importance of this variation for thought and culture, since, whereas Boas subscribed to the view that the influences on thought and culture were negligible, Sapir, (especially towards the end of his life) believed that there was an influence on thought, but the linkage to culture, in the light of information then available, was dubious.¹³

The focus of Lacy's book is on the influence of language on thought rather than the influence of thought on language, and he believes that Whorf's work forms the starting point for all contemporary research.¹⁴ Chase also regards Whorf's contribution as greatly significant particularly to semantics,

using linguistics as a tool for the analysis of meaning. Indeed, Chase considers that "[n]o careful student of communication and meaning can afford to neglect him. One might add that no philosophical scientist or scientific philosopher can afford to neglect him." Chase distinguishes two paramount hypotheses: "First, that all higher levels of thinking are dependent on language. Second, that the structure of the language one habitually uses influences the manner in which one understands his environment. The picture of the universe shifts from tongue to tongue." It should be noted that this reasoning constitutes a point of departure for PC, which specifically negates the idea of the possibility of what it terms "viewpoint neutrality". Advocates of PC, moreover, believe that the use of PC terms will ultimately lead to a more equal and just society.

At the first International Congress of Americanists which he attended, Whorf presented a paper on Aztec linguistics in which he identified a phenomenon he dubbed "oligosynthesis". This is the name he gave for the type of language structure in which the entire vocabulary, or the overwhelming majority of it, "may be reduced to a very small number of roots or significant elements, irrespective of whether these roots or elements are to be regarded as original, standing anterior to the language as we know it, or as never having had independent existence, theirs being an implicit existence as parts in words that were always undissociated wholes." It was this phenomenon that Whorf was to develop, principally through his investigation of the Hopi language, whose unusual grammar he believed might indicate a different way of perception and conception of reality on the part of the native speakers of

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Hopi.¹⁸ This observation led, in turn, to the principle of linguistic relativity, a hypothesis, which states that "the structure of a human being's language influences the manner in which he understands reality and behaves with respect to it."¹⁹

Fasold points to "a possible consequence" of this which would be that "speakers of different languages could stand side by side and experience precisely the same event and yet understand it in profoundly different ways. Furthermore, each would find it difficult or impossible to understand the event from the other's perspective." Fasold also remarks on the fact that Whorf's hypothesis, dramatic as it is, was the object of great controversy, right from the start.

In glossing two critics of Whorf's methodology and conclusions, Lenneberg and Feuer, Carroll elaborates upon the content of this controversy. Lenneberg's criticism stems mainly from Whorf's methodology. He finds the technique of translation which Whorf so often employed to demonstrate differences in languages, faulty on various counts, not least because large differences in the linguistic handling of specific events do not necessarily imply corresponding differences in the perception of that event. Indeed, they may simply be the result of "metaphorical developments in the language, of which the speakers may not ordinarily be aware (just as we do not ordinarily think of 'breakfast' as breaking a fast)."²¹ Moreover, Lenneberg is insistent that before they can be correlated it is necessary to describe linguistic and nonlinguistic events and to observe them separately. Similarly, "the usual canons of evidence must be applied in demonstrating any such association

between such events. Otherwise, the linguistic relativity principle becomes embarrassingly circular, or at least tautological, in that the only evidence for differences in 'world view' turns out to be the linguistic differences.²²

Feuer's objections, as a social philosopher, derive from his belief that on a priori grounds, because a correct perception of space, time, causation and other fundamental elements of the physical world is necessary to survival, cultures speaking different languages would not be expected to perceive them in different ways.²³

Fasold believes that since Whorf's untimely death in 1941 the research carried out on his hypothesis has yielded few firm conclusions. He cites Joshua Fishman as pointing out that it is not really clear to what extent Whorf was actually prepared to carry his hypothesis, and in consequence, much of the controversy is over what Whorf "really meant". Fishman adduces another argument, namely that there is great disagreement about the methods to be used in this type of research and the type of evidence to be considered or ignored. Whorf and his followers tend to rely on methods "in the spirit of participant-observation and the data it produces", while his critics are apt to use "carefully-designed experiments with attempts to control variables, along with the use of statistical procedures to evaluate the results."²⁴

However, nowadays there is a general tendency to refer to "strong" or "weak" versions of the Whorfian hypothesis, whereby those who subscribe to the "strong" version believe that people's cognitive categories are determined by the languages they speak, while the "weak" version understands that people's behaviour will, under certain circumstances, tend to be guided by the

linguistic categories of the language they speak.²³ As Fasold maintains, there is in general much more agreement over the weak version of the hypothesis, and discussion is not usually centred on whether Whorf was right or wrong but on how strong or weak a version is credible.

John Wilson's observations, linking Orwell to Sapir and Whorf, are pertinent on various counts to the present study. He understands the underlying premise to be transferrable to the language employed by politicians, since politicians' language, far from only conveying the message, also "creates for the listener a controlled cognitive environment from which any interpretation is manipulated."

This essentially Orwellian thesis finds some support in the linguistic writing of Sapir [...] and Whorf [...] who argue that our world view is relatively constrained by the linguistic system we employ in representing the world.[...] There is undoubtedly some truth in the weak version of this thesis, but the fact that language can influence how we think is a nihilistic one (Strong, 1984). In language use there are no culture-free interpretations; there are simply alternatives, guided by linguistic choices operating at various levels of structure.²⁶

George Grace, on his part, believes that the negative reactions to Whorf's hypothesis are derived in part from linguists' assumptions about the nature of language which are incompatible with the facts upon which Whorf insisted. These assumptions were not hypotheses to be tested, and thus of the problematic kind, but rather "of the incorrigible kind - that is, those which are not supposed to be acknowledged and which by the nature of their function

necessarily elude exact formulation."²⁷ Linguistics and disciplines which shared these assumptions were consequently forced to "find a way of setting aside the questions raised by Whorf", to avoid having their own assumptions gradually exposed and called into question."²⁸ Grace believes that linguistic science has been committed to a model of language structure which has contributed to clouding the issue of language and thought:

In this model all of the features which signal relations among elements in the sentence are seen as associated together in a single system -the syntactic system- and, furthermore, that system is considered to represent the essence of the language. This particular perspective of linguistic science has made it possible to acknowledge that there is a strong relation between the *vocabulary* of a language and the thought of its speakers without acknowledging that the real *essence* of the language is in any way implicated.²⁹

Cameron bears out Fasold's claim that there is general scepticism over the strong version of Whorf's hypothesis, by affirming that on the weaker assertion, that language can *influence* perceptions, the evidence is conflicting.³⁰ Cameron is alluding at this point to Ehrenreich and Hughes who "both doubt whether changing the words people use by fiat does anything to change the way they think."³¹ The author states her view in the following words: "Language is a highly variable and radically context-dependent phenomenon which may have effects on perception, but only in conjunction with other factors. Linguistic conventions help to naturalize and reproduce certain beliefs and assumptions, but these are not necessarily dependent on

language or 'caused' by it."³² In this opinion we see a two-way traffic between language and different cultural factors. Cameron also assumes that the fundamental purpose of language is to communicate and that communication is only possible when "everyone agrees to honour the linguistic contract which prescribes a set of relationships between words and meaning."³³ Nevertheless, there are other factors which contribute to successful communication.

In his world-acclaimed *How To Do Things With Words*, J.L. Austin notes how philosophers have traditionally been concerned with problems of "locutionary usage", although he concedes that "for some years we have been realizing more and more clearly that the occasion of an utterance matters seriously, and that the words used are to some extent to be 'explained' by the 'context' in which they are designed to be or have actually been spoken in a linguistic interchange." Austin believes, however, that there is still a tendency to give explanations in terms of "the meanings of words". This observation is of great significance for the purposes of the present study, for as will be seen in the following section, the PC debate pays much attention to the meaning of words, to its possible manipulation and to the possibility that changing meaning may cause changes in the way we perceive, conceive and represent reality.

Similarly, the speech code issue has been conducted in terms which often either echo or contravene Austin's advice: "Since our acts are actions, we must always remember the distinction between producing effects or consequences which are intended or unintended; and (i) when the speaker intends to produce an effect it may nevertheless not occur, and (ii) when he

does not intend to produce it or intends not to produce it it may nevertheless occur."35 In the course of his discussion of the history of hate speech in America, Walter Samuel states of the Michigan University speech codes, which will be examined presently, that there were two aspects of the policy which caused immediate alarm to civil libertarians: "[F]irst, it did not explicitly require that an offensive expression be directed at an individual. Second, it did not specifically exempt classroom situations."36

Another concept in language, -crucial for the examination of "PC"- that of "truth" and its antonym, "falsity", is also examined by Austin when he affirms that what is left out or put in, as well as being misleading, affects the truth or falsity of statements. "It is essential to realize that 'true' and 'false', like 'free' and 'unfree', do not stand for anything simple at all; but only for a general dimension of being a right or proper thing to say as opposed to a wrong thing, in these circumstances, to this audience, for these purposes and with these intentions." Arguments such as this seem to challenge a cherished chimera, that of the possibility of "neutral" language, frequently either tacitly assumed or specifically invoked by the opponents of political correctness. As Cameron asserts:

there is always a point of view in language, but we are apt to notice it only when it is not one we share. The politics of discourse are about getting others to believe that the point of view embodied in this or that verbal representation is not really a point of view but just the plain truth of the matter, whereas alternative representations are biased and perverse. Certainly, those who talk about 'collateral damage' and 'the elimination of

undesirable elements' are engaged in this kind of politics. But so too are those who tell us that what should have been said in both cases is 'murder', and that referring to murder as 'collateral damage' is a perversion of the English language.³⁸

Thus, "realism" may be considered unattainable in linguistic terms. Cameron again points to the apparent artificiality of actual speech when transcribed; we are so used to the conventions of dialogue as found in novels, just as we see nothing strange in the "omniscient narrator", who sees all and knows all. Similarly, journalistic language with its terseness, simplicity and concreteness suggests "unmediated access to the objective facts of the story." There are constant appeals throughout the PC debates for objectivity, by which it is inferred that the truth may be made known. As has been demonstrated, this is a far more complex issue than many are prepared to admit.

NOTES

- 1. Stuart Chase, Foreword, in John B. Carroll, (ed.) anguage, Thought, and Reality: Selected Writings of Benjamin Lee Whorf, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1956), p. vii.
- 2. Op, cit., p. vii.
- 3. George Orwell, Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters, edited by Ian Angus and Sonia Orwell, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968), from now on, CEJL, IV, p. 169-170.

As will be seen in the discussion of George Orwell's views on language, there is some dispute as to what his real opinions on the question of realism were, and they are central to one's interpretation of Nineteen Eighty-Four, and in particular of Newspeak. For the view held in the present study, see Roger Fowler, The Language of George Orwell, (London: Macmillan, 1995), p. 31: "oversymplifying, one may be either a 'realist' or a 'nominalist'. A nominalist believes that things, or our ideas of them, do not have a naturally discrete existence or structure of their own, but are shaped by the vocabulary that we have available for talking about them. Orwell was not a nominalist, and it is crucial to realise that it is an essentially nominalist theory of how language might influence thought that he attacks with a biting satire as 'Newspeak' in Nineteen Eighty-Four."

- 4. John A. Lacy, Language, Diversity and Thought: A Reformulation of the Linguistic Relativity Hypothesis, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 11-13.
- 5. Op. cit., p. 14.
- 6. Ibid., p. 14.
- 7. For Sapir's interpretation, see also, Ralph Fasold's elucidation in Sociolinguistics of Language, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), p. 50-51: "Language is a guide to 'social reality'... Human beings do not live in the objective world alone, nor alone in the world of social activity as ordinarily understood, but very much at the mercy of the particular language which has become the medium of expression for their society. It is quite an illusion to imagine that one adjusts to reality essentially without the use of language and that language is merely an incidental means of solving problems of communication or reflection. The fact of the matter is that the 'real world' is to a large extent unconsciously built up on the language habits of the group. No two languages are ever sufficiently similar to be considered as representing the same social

reality. The worlds in which different societies live are distinct worlds, not merely the same world with different labels attached... We see and hear and otherwise experience very largely as we do because the language habits of our community predispose certain choices of interpretation."

- 8. Lacy, Op. cit., p. 20.
- 9. Op. cit., p. 23.
- 10. Ibid., p. 23.
- 11. Ibid., p. 23-24.
- 12. Miguel Martínez López, "Peace: a term in need of reappraisal. (Orwell's predictions in the light of a political and sociosemiotic analysis)", in Erhard Zurawka et al., (eds.) Fundamentos Culturales de la Paz en Europa, (Barcelona: PPU, 1986), p. 583, citing from Bob Hodge and Roger Fowler, "Orwellian Linguistics", in Roger Fowler et al., Language and Control, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979), p. 6-25).
- 13. Ibid., p. 24.
- 14. Ibid., p. 8.
- 15. Chase, Op. cit., p. vi.
- 16. Op. cit., p. vi.
- 17. Carroll, Op. cit., p. 12.
- 18. Op. cit., p. 17.
- 19. Ibid., p. 23. For another evaluation of Whorf's work in this respect, see also Lacy, Op. cit., p. 67-68: "In his consideration of the influence of languages on thought, Whorf developed, albeit implicitly, a model emphasizing the unwitting appropriation of linguistic analogies -both lexical and grammatical- in habitual everyday thought. Here again, he made more explicit and investigable ideas first suggested in a much more general way by Sapir; Whorf pinpointed precise ways in which linguistic categories could introduce language-specific aspects of meaning into the interpretation of experience and showed how these patterns could be traced in the grammar. He was also the first to seek clear-cut and distinct empirical evidence for the influence of language. The most important of his arguments involved constructing an interpretation of distinctive analogical structures in two languages -Hopi and Englishand postulating on the basis of this analysis a characteristic cognitive

orientation which should characterize speakers of those languages. He then provided evidence for the presence of such cognitive orientations by describing specific, observable patterns of behavior in the two associated cultures. The crucial element of his argument is the emphasis on the importance of the transfer of elements of meaning within linguistic analogies for the individual interpretation of experience which, in turn, shapes specific cultural patterns of behavior. Whorf clearly rejected simple-minded correlations of the formal features of language with general cultural characteristics. He also emphasized that linguistic influences of the type he analyzed would only be operative in a context of long historical interaction between a language and other aspects of culture. In short, Whorf not only transformed Sapir's preliminary statements about linguistic relativity into a specific empirically investigable claim, but also provided the first evidence of the existence of the hypothesized effects."

- 20. Fasold, Op. cit., p. 52.
- 21. Carroll, Op. cit., p. 28.
- 22. Op. cit., p. 28.
- 23. Ibid., p. 28.
- 24. Fasold, Op. cit., p. 52-53, citing from Joshua Fishman, "Whorfianism of the third kind: ethnolinguistic diversity as a worldwide societal asset", Language in Society, (1982) 11(1), p. 1-14.

See also Lacy, Op. cit., p. 6-7: "There is at present little agreement about the influence of linguistic variety on thought or on the proper approach to studying the issue."

- 25. Fasold, Op. cit., p. 53.
- 26. John Wilson, Politically Speaking: The Pragmatic Analysis of Political Language, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), p. 11-12.
- 27. George W. Grace, *The Linguistic Construction of Reality*, (London: Croom Helm, 1987), p. 118.
- 28. Op. cit., p. 117-118.
- 29. Ibid., p. 122.
- 30. Deborah Cameron, *Verbal Hygiene*, (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 142.
- 31. Op. cit., p. 142.

- 32. Ibid., p. 142
- 33. Ibid., p. 156.
- 34. J.L. Austin, How To Do Things With Words, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), p. 100. Although later philosophers, notably Searle and more recently Habermas, have made important contributions to Speech Act theory, Austin's formulation of these ideas is considered especially appropriate for this discussion given the succinctness of his expression.
- 35. Op. cit., p. 106.
- 36. Walter Samuel, Hate Speech: The History of an American Controversy (Lincoln, NA: University of Nebraska Press. 1994), p.150.
- 37. Austin, Op. cit., p. 144-145.
- 38. Cameron, Op. cit., p. 74.
- 39. Ibid., p. 75.

2.iii. The origins of political correctness: The United States

a) The university campus

The enormous repercussions of the PC debate on American college and university campuses are reflected in the proliferation of books that have appeared on political correctness and which concentrate on the university scene. The growing interest in the subject of political correctness can be seen, for example, in various books published between 1992 and 1995.

Referring to the situation of PC on campuses, Stanley Fish reports that political correctness is supposedly the property of left-leaning academics who have conspired to subvert standards by imposing ideological requirements on the content of courses and by penalizing those who prefer to teach traditional materials by traditional methods. According to him: "If you read the popular press, you get the impression that the effects of this conspiracy are far reaching and that those engaged in it are organized in almost a paramilitary fashion."²

The impact of political correctness in American universities, therefore, goes well beyond the confines of the campus, and the reason why so much

attention has been and is being devoted to this aspect of the PC polemic is summarized in the following terms by an American academic who lives in Britain and is engaged in research at Middlesex university:

While liberal academics may see the attack on political correctness as merely an hysterical media creation, there is no doubt that it touches some of America's deepest concerns - on both the right and left. Not just about the curriculum and the issues of racism, sexism and homophobia on campus but also about the admission and recruitment of students, the decline of academic standards and the increasing of tuition fees and crisis of funding. There is certainly a growing loss of confidence in one of the world's largest and best-funded collection of universities. However, what is less clear is the extent to which the sensational image of political correctness represents accurately what is actually happening on campus.³

Once again we see how the fundamental issues are clouded by the "sensational image of political correctness", and indeed, books like Dinesh D'Souza's *Illiberal Education* are nothing if not sensational and provocative. John Searle contends that the PC debate in higher education "is conducted at a rather low level. It tends to be shrill and vindictive, and the level of argumentation is not entirely appropriate to the presentation of a philosophy of education". In tracing D'Souza's career in America, where he arrived to study at Dartmouth from his native India in 1978, Bérubé refers to how in his articles in the *Atlantic* D'Souza's "ignorance pales before his capacity for feigning moral hysteria" and to how in *Illiberal Education* "his dedication to factual accuracy will turn out to be passionately superficial". The 1992

Vintage edition to D'Souza's book begins with an introduction that immediately establishes its author as an opponent of political correctness and one who views the debate as a power struggle in which dangerous leftist ideology is disguised under the mantle of PC:

Like Stalinists and Trotskyists of an earlier day, contemporary campus activists maintain that 'everything is political' and thus it seems quite proper to insist that classroom lectures, the use of language, and even styles of dress and demeanor reflect the P.C. stance of the new generation of professors and administrators -products of the counterculture of the 1960s- who are coming to power in American universities.⁷

Both sides of the debate plead ideological purity which is compounded with their focus on cultural warfare. It must be observed that in this, conservative polemicists have often mirrored their opponents. Chief among these is Allan Bloom, of whom Dickstein observes that "with his hatred of relativism and love of the classical tradition, [he] was genuinely committed to his own eccentric vision of Western civilization, anchored in Plato and Rousseau who were our most eloquent spokesmen for a dictatorship of virtue." That Bloom's opinions are indeed eccentric is perhaps adequately manifested in his evaluation of the anthropologist Margaret Mead as a "sexual adventurer." Dickstein believes that Bloom's successors, Hilton Kramer, William Bennett, Roger Kimball, Dinesh D'Souza, "merely pay lip service to a complacent, unexamined notion of tradition. Their real aim is trashing the left, satirizing its absurdities and excesses, winning the ideological combat."

Writing about the university, they idealize an earlier academic environment in which many issues were simply never discussed, "just as they hypostatize the canon into a fixed body of masterpieces, an official set of Western values rather than as a constantly shifting series of rhetorical and moral challenges." 10

Yet it would be wrong to characterize all those who speak out against political correctness as mindless bigots or nostalgic bastions of the hard right. There are many commentators who would perhaps feel more sympathy for the ideas behind PC if its proponents were less messianic and intolerant. Melanie Phillips was a longtime columnist for the *Guardian* and is presently working for the *Observer*, both newspapers with a liberal focus. She herself comes from a liberal, left-of-centre background and she voices her misgivings and reservations about PC forcefully and coherently in an article entitled *Illiberal Liberalism*. She finds herself in an invidious position that she feels is incomprehensible because, in questioning some of the procedures and attitudes of the proponents of political correctness, she is now branded as a reactionary, and "condemned by people on the left for being a traitor to the cause." This brings her to express her perplexity at how a belief that in theory embodied tolerance has come to stand for intolerance:

Forcing people to be free, it seems to me, lurks at the very heart of modern political correctness. It drives the projects to make us all confess our racism or deny that there are norms of behaviour. It is creating tyrannies of intellectual coercion particularly in academic institutions, whose traditions of liberal tolerance make them vulnerable to charges of bigotry. And just

as Rousseau's pursuit of freedom created the opposite result, so these politically correct attitudes help to bring about the very prejudices they purport to despise.¹²

A great part of D'Souza's Illiberal Education is a compendium of the anecdotal evidence Goodheart deplored, and is full of quotations from individual students or teachers designed to typify D'Souza's arguments. One example among many of the kind of anecdotes that he decides are illustrative of the ills of political correctness on campus is when he quotes a black student at Harvard. "'French is considered a very backward language here, because it has masculine and feminine words,' Delci explained. Whenever she sees ads now, Delci said, 'I have been trained by Harvard to look for racist and sexist implications'."13 Bérubé in particular, refutes many of D'Souza's claims as biased, misinformed or plain untrue. However, in the literature on political correctness one finds D'Souza's views quoted and repeated endlessly by both the critics (such as he is) and by the proponents of PC. An indication of just how powerful his influence has been on received thought about PC in the university is demonstrated by the fact that although D'Souza's book could be considered well nigh incendiary in the views and incidents it describes, there has been no review of its content by similar opponents of PC.14

Bérubé notes that in 1981 D'Souza had maliciously 'outed' some gay students at Dartmouth (one of whom subsequently committed suicide) and refers to a polemic between himself and D'Souza conducted in 1991 in the Village Voice about this episode. Bérubé suggests that the mentality that "gives a D'Souza" to attack academe "is the same mentality that gave us a Quayle to

attack Clinton's 'hypocrisy' over Vietnam"; in other words, that these critics are unfair, and he considers "that the right's leading PC people are playing either with loaded dice or with something less than a full deck." 15

John Annette is of the opinion that most new right critics are unified in their view of the cause and meaning of "politically correct nonsense", but he considers that the debate has greatly divided the left. He notes that the entry of new left intellectuals into positions of power in the university in the 1970s "is seen by some radicals as leading to the demise of the cultural critic who previously wrote for a public audience but is now assimilated by the university." He observes that according to both its right and left critics political correctness represents "a form of Orwellian thought police on the campus exercising power and surveillance both explicitly and implicitly." At the same time he considers that the debate about political correctness seems to illustrate the fact that many academics are concerned to address major political issues and to reach out to a wider audience by responding to significant cultural and political changes in American society while being reluctant to politicise the academy itself.

John Searle could no doubt be included within this category of academics. He identifies advocates of PC as postmodernists and makes a more profound analysis of the divisions within the academy. From this analysis it is clear why the more traditional elements of society may feel uneasy at the challenge posed to their conception of what the university is and what it should be. Moreover, advocates of PC commonly diagnose the irritation of the right at political correctness as originating in a fear of losing their hegemony in

society. In terms of the university this can be translated as a fear of a deep change in previously universally accepted values.

In journalistic accounts, the distinction between the traditional university and the discourse of postmodernism is usually described in political terms: the traditional university claims to cherish knowledge for its own sake and for its political applications, and it attempts to be apolitical or at least politically neutral. The university of postmodernism thinks that all discourse is political anyway, and it seeks to use the university for beneficial rather than repressive political ends. This characterization is partly correct, but I think that the political dimensions of this dispute can only be understood against a deeper dispute about fundamental philosophical issues. The postmodernists are attempting to challenge certain traditional assumptions about the nature of truth, objectivity, rationality, reality, and intellectual quality.¹⁸

In the introduction to a collection of essays on the PC wars and the academy, Jeffrey Williams posits several interrelated explanations of the PC troubles. He first mentions the fruition of the right turn in politics through the eighties under Presidents Reagan and Bush, which brought with it the right reversal of those years and what they have come to represent, notably the social policies such as civil rights, women's rights and welfare associated with the sixties. Throughout the eighties there was a manifestation of class and a massive shifting of wealth, in part tied to the reversal of the social programmes of the sixties, providing an ideological or public relations programme to justify this shift. Consequently, talk of equal rights can then be dismissed as

hopelessly PC, enabling the money slide to continue relatively unimpeded.

A result of the techniques of ideology of managerial democracy in late capitalism ensures that power is maintained in a flexible, decentred economic system by the maintenance of a common culture. Furthermore, the general bias of the media is to a conservative-right politics and to unexamined explanations from "official" sources. This is contrary to the common belief that the media represents liberal concerns, for it is owned and controlled largely by conservative corporate interests and draws on a cadre of establishment sources. There was a reaction against any oppositional or left critical discourses that could be encompassed by "theory". Included amongst these were marxism and feminism as well as deconstruction which "carried with it the gesture of critique of 'Western metaphysics' and all that entails." This in turn was a manifestation of the residual strand of anti-intellectualism in American life.

There also exists a bias against the academy, related to antiintellectualism, as otherworldly, an ivory tower, and outside or unaware of real
world concerns. Williams quotes the columnist Lewis Grizzard parodying the
classic PC academic as "head of the sociology department at some large,
liberal-thinking college or university like Harvard or Stanford or Pussy Willow
A & M, who says a lot of things you don't understand. And for good reason.
What people like that say rarely makes sense."

Another bias against the
academy sees it as "a bed of radicals, lefties, and other enemies of the free
world."

Williams's reading of this bias is that it stems from the fear that
academics and intellectuals make too much sense and have too much effect and

back social programmes is to take universities back from their populist and reasonably democratic use in the sixties and seventies, evidenced by the reductions in aid under Reagan. Finally he sees PC as a figural displacement or substitute for communism, thereby filling a prime need and place as a right ideological target. "Overall, the PC debacle or the culture war occurs at the confluence of all of these factors. In part, the message of this collection is that there's no simple answer -that it's a reactionary conspiracy, that it's just a flashy media story- to why this has come about."²²

It is not only those who sympathize with PC who are aware of the antiintellectualism in American society, for an outspoken opponent of political
correctness in an article by William Phillips entitled "Against Political
Correctness: Eleven Points" alludes to the fact that a wave of anti-intellectual
and anti-educational attitudes has swept over the country. However, his
interpretation of the consequences is radically different, and represents the
opinion of the right about the effects of PC in the university. According to
Phillips: "[t]he belief that a properly educated person makes for a civilized
citizen has almost disappeared. We cannot conceal the fact that standards have
fallen, that the primary value for many students is getting a degree, not
learning."²⁴

Some of the events that have marked the political correctness debate at universities and colleges should now be mentioned. The appointment during the Reagan administration of Lynne Cheney as chair of the National Endowment for the Humanities crystallized the innate conflict between the

radical-liberal majority on campuses and the hard right of the administration governing them. Cheney's controversial views on education policy were extremely influential, expressed in such pamphlets as *Humanities in America:*A Report to the President, the Congress, and the American People (1988) or in reports such as Telling the Truth: A Report on the State of the Humanities in Higher Education (1992).

Annette highlights two years as especially significant. 1987 saw the setting up of the National Association of Scholars with the mission of defending academic freedom and critically reappraising PC doctrines such as affirmative action and campus speech and behaviour censorship. In 1991, in opposition, a number of leading liberal academics established the Teachers for a Democratic Culture. Their "Statement of Principles" denounced the hypocrisy of those who claim to be above politics at the same time as criticising the politicisation of higher education. They also point out the power base of the criticism, coming as it does from such wealthy institutions as the American Enterprise Institute, the Olin Foundation and the public National Endowment for the Humanities amongst others.25 As we have already seen from D'Souza, one argument of the opponents of political correctness is that advocates of PC are latter-day marxists manipulating their ideas on university or college campuses. To quote a similar view, "one of the main attacks lobbed in return at the Teachers for a Democratic Culture is the conspiracy-of-1960s-radicalsnow-in-positions-of-power theory."26

Bérubé refers to and quotes from part of an editorial in the New Republic on 14 June 1993, entitled "Withdraw Guinier". Lana Guinier was a

female and black Clinton nominee to a top civil rights position, and her nomination was hotly contested in numerous publications. Such a furore was mounted in the press that Clinton decided to withdraw his nomination of Lana Guinier before she had been given so much as a public hearing. This particular editorial mentions Sheldon Hackney, "who as president of the University of Pennsylvania, supported codes to limit the free speech of students [and] is the nominee for the National Endowment for the Arts [sic]." When Hackney finally appeared before the Senate Committee on Labor and Human Resources to be booted, he felt obliged, according to Bérubé, to assure his questioners "that he was not the kind of irresponsible nihilist-PC academic they had been reading about in the papers." Bérubé continues:

Asked about political correctness at the hearing, Mr Hackney said it could be 'a serious problem if it were to capture a campus, if it were to become the orthodoxy shutting out other points of view'. He said he was particularly troubled by 'the intellectual form of political correctness' - scholarly fields like deconstruction and post-structuralism - that, he said, maintain 'that every thought is a political thought, that every statement is a political statement, so that there can be no objective tests for truth'.²⁹

Presumably he obtained his nomination, for Bérubé's verdict on what he views as a rather shameful example of pusillanimity, is short and very damning: "And so Sheldon Hackney avoided becoming the next Lana Guinier."³⁰

Bérubé's book, so the author tells us, has various kinds of readers in mind. Broadly, they include "those academics who still think the culture wars

won't really affect them or their livelihoods." He wishes to address "the broad group of nonacademic liberals and centrists who have been hitherto all too susceptible to anti-academic public relations work from the right"; and he wants "to challenge, provoke and engage in any way possible those relatively responsible social conservatives sincerely committed to some variations on the ideals of liberty and justice, and to appeal to their sense of chagrin at (and difference from) the thuggish tactics of their nominal associates on the hard right."³¹

His view endorses the opinion that nobody can or should remain neutral on the political correctness issue, and it underlines the impact that the anti PC lobby is felt to have made in the media. Moreover, his view of the PC wars is clearly and unequivocally that of one who is committed to the philosophy and much of the practice brought about by political correctness on campuses. It is a book that makes for very interesting reading and is refreshing in that it avoids the turgid earnestness and lack of humour that pervades much that is written in defence of PC. He determines the onset of the perception of a need for change as occurring during the eighties, when "academic critics [began] to question the moral urgency and certainty with which a previous critical consensus enforced the distinction between high and low culture, and the distinction between the aesthetic and the nonaesthetic."³²

The new departure which so much worries and disturbs more traditional members of faculty is that the critics to whom Bérubé refers have argued that the categories of aesthetic and moral value are contested and not identical categories, and that they are historically and socially variable. Those

and re-evaluating the texts that are taught. This in turn leads to a reappraisal as well of other texts which previously were not taught, and the means by which the value of these texts is produced and reproduced. As he notes, it follows, therefore, "that we are being attacked over these exigencies of value not because we have vacated the terrain on which critics interrogate cultural values, but precisely because we have not vacated this terrain." He sees that it is precisely this academic transvaluation of all questions of aesthetic and cultural value which provides one of the primary reasons they are met with such hostility and misunderstanding in the literary public sphere.

There is no doubt that a popular perception of postmodernism exists whereby there are no "facts", or that anything goes so long as everybody is happy. The counter-argument is that postmodernism has paid acute attention to how various human communities go about deciding what will count as "facts". Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962) is often cited and applied to theory in the humanities, to explain the occurrence of revolutionary "paradigm-shifts" when one dominant theory supersedes another.³⁴ It should be understood that the new paradigm does not simply "falsify" or "disprove" the older model, but instead, according to Kuhn, paradigm-shifts are matters in which neither proof nor error is at issue. This is so because different scientific communities were simply seeing different "facts" even when they were looking at what we now think are the same phenomena.

It is interesting to note how the tenets of postmodernism and other allied

tendencies have been contested. Bérubé maintains that traditionalists and conservatives have succeeded in opposing the academic transvaluation of value by painting it as a radical relativism that refuses to believe in "values", thereby "generating a moral panic that the institutional guardians of culture have left their posts - or worse, transformed their posts into soapboxes from which they proclaim that there should be no guardians of culture, since everything is as beautiful and true as everything else." We have already seen at the end of the section devoted to euphemism and political correctness the valid and very telling points he makes on the monopoly claimed by the right to the holding of values.

Critics of PC parody the relativism proclaimed by Kuhn and by post modernism and deconstructivism. Yet it is not fair to say that this relativism regards every interpretation, every historical epoch, every value system or every form of government as "equal". On the contrary, the claim would be that we do not have access to the kind of historical omniscience that would enable us to equalize or rank everything in the first place. Bérubé contends that we can look back and say that we are grateful that we now conduct trials by jury instead of trials by ordeal, but "we shouldn't conclude therefrom that our current beliefs are the culmination and fulfillment of all human history." This of course directly challenges the view that Western society is necessarily more "advanced" than others, an opinion constantly voiced by Allan Bloom and followers such as William Bennett who are now known in some quarters as the "Killer B's."

Through this discussion of some of the most relevant works which have

contributed to the PC debate on the campus, it has become clear that there is a very profound division of opinions within the university about the role that PC should or should not play. Some contend that PC pervades every activity on campus and this extreme position is taken by Chester E. Finn, former Assistant Secretary in the Department of Education, who affirms that there are colleges that do not oblige anyone to attend class regularly, to exercise in the gym, to drive safely, or to eat a balanced diet. He argues that a student may do anything he likes with or to his fellow students, including things that are "indisputably illegal, unhealthy, and dangerous for everyone concerned, and the university turns a blind eye. What a student may not do, under any circumstances, is to speak of another student's origins, inclinations or appearance."

In the opinion of Goodheart, opponents of PC have a parasitic and negative relation to the topic which puts them at a disadvantage. He considers that they spend a great deal of time and energy arguing against PC, but do not offer much in the way of alternative conceptions of what is to be taught and how it should be taught, "as if the appropriate form and content of teaching had been decided long ago and in recent years corruption had set in." 38

There is, however a more optimistic vision of a civilised debate about political correctness, held by Annette, amongst others. This view considers that although the debate is deeply divisive, it creates an important opportunity to examine how universities might provide a higher education that helps American society to adapt to some of the fundamental social and political changes it faces. Searle suggests that one of the most liberating effects of

"liberal education" is that it enables one to come to see one's own culture as one of the possible forms of life and sensibility that exist.³⁹ The value of true debate within the university is that it enables evaluation and perspective that come from critical thinking, and indeed, this kind of analysis is surely one of the best by-products that the university can provide its students. As Searle points out, one of the great contributions of education should lie not in what is explicitly said, but in the kind of sensibility that is imparted. What is said, by way of conveying information, is no more important than what is left unsaid. However, the unsaid can only be imparted by way of actually saying something.

Searle takes the English liberal philosopher Michael Oakeshott to task, reviewing his ideas and overall philosophy of education expressed in *The Voice* of Liberal Learning. He alludes to the methods employed by deconstructionists which will be presently discussed with respect to the "canon":

Because Oakeshott fails to allow for the ontology of the natural sciences as part of the world of our experience, he also cannot account for one of the great tensions in contemporary intellectual life, namely that between the modes of explanation that we have come to accept in the natural sciences, and the modes of explanation that are appropriate to mentalistic phenomena, such as those found in history, sociology, economics, and large parts of psychology. He correctly sees that it is bogus of the so-called "social sciences" to try to ape the explanatory apparatus of the natural sciences, but he fails to appreciate the power or even the nature of the model they are trying to ape.⁴⁰

But how does the PC debate actually affect members of the university communities? An incoming student will first become aware of the criteria for admission which differ according to the various colleges or universities. Previously these criteria were chiefly grounded upon standards of merit or achievement, which could include academic excellence as measured by the SAT score, and certain factors such as special aptitude for sports, art, or music, or work experience or community service. In this situation it was infinitely easier for a white male to enter a prestigious college than for a female, be she white or not, or for any person from a community other than the white one. In order to combat this evident example of discrimination endured by members of groups other than that of white males, it was decided in some colleges and universities that a system of quotas could be introduced which would ensure proportional representation. This has become known as 'affirmative action', or alternatively, 'affirmative discrimination', although Lino Graglia notes that 'diversity' is largely replacing the term 'affirmative action' "as it becomes less a euphemism than a pejorative."41

Stanley Fish examines the SAT or Scholastic Aptitude Test that is administered by a private agency, the College Board, which D'Souza cites as evidence that as a result of affirmative action policies many white or Asian students are denied admission to colleges or universities. D'Souza devotes a complete chapter to this aspect of PC on campus and takes as an example of all he finds reprehensible about proportional representation, his version of the admissions policy at Berkeley in the late eighties and early nineties. Here the problem was understood not as one of overrepresentation of white males among

the student body, but of Asian Americans. Asian Americans apparently do very well on test scores, in part due to a strong work ethic and to family encouragement, and there has been a great influx of Asians to California in recent years. D'Souza cites as emblematic the case of a student from California of Chinese descent, with impeccable credentials, who was refused admission to Berkeley. He appealed against the decision and much publicity was given to his case both in California and nationwide.⁴³

Berkeley's first affirmative action campaign was aimed largely at black and Hispanic schools in California. It was hoped to correct the ethnic imbalance by increasing the admission pools of these minorities. However, because Berkeley's admission requirements were very stringent, apparently not enough students from these minorities were found eligible, and so (according to D'Souza) the admission standards for African American and Hispanic students were lowered, resulting in what appeared to be an advantage for those groups but a disadvantage for Asian Americans.

In his analysis of the SAT Stanley Fish shows how the idea of "merit" is in no sense neutral, quoting statistical studies which have established that test scores "are calibrated to income and zip codes". Accordingly, students "from families with incomes of over \$50,000 will perform on the average of twenty-five percent better than students coming from families with incomes of \$12,000, a differential of about a hundred points in both the math and verbal sections of the test." Furthermore, it has been amply demonstrated that scores vary in relation to cultural background. There is a tacit assumption of a certain uniformity in educational experience and life-style, that works against

those who have had a different experience and lived different kinds of lives. Fish quotes a commentator as saying that the kind of "ability" measured is knowing or not knowing about oarsmen and regattas or about polo and mallets, and he sums up the basic criteria of merit as he sees it in the SAT: "In short, what is being measured by the SAT is not absolutes like native ability or merit but accidents like birth, social position, access to libraries, the opportunity to take vacations or to take tennis lessons."

Moreover, Fish notes the presence of "the not-so-small industry of SAT coaching", where what are taught are not content and subject matter, but test-taking skills, which as he points out, "are themselves not innate or universal but specific to a particular cultural environment." He typifies this environment as that of those whose families spend Sunday morning doing the *New York Times* crossword puzzles, and who can afford to send younger members to the expensive Princeton Review Course. The very fact that the test scores can be improved by cram courses teaching tricks rather than content is part of the explanation of the fact that there is a low correlation between test scores and academic performance. He quotes evidence from another source showing that the correlation between SAT scores and college grades is lower than the correlation between height and weight. The source Fish cites is David Owen. 47

Diane Ravitch as Assistant Secretary of Education with special interest in testing, stated her opinion of the PC stance on this very question and points to the consequences she believes it entails. Ravitch believes that the larger issue behind the PC perspective is that objective measures are not possible

because for them objective tests are never objective and universal ideas are never universal. In her words: "All decisions, all choices, all competitions are engineered to favor some group, depending on who is in power. The idea of merit is a social construct, invented by the powerful to protect people like themselves." She considers it a consequence of this attitude that "whereas 'fair' used to mean that the test given was the same for everyone, 'fair' now means that the same proportion of all groups will succeed on any test."

Broadly speaking, Fish and D'Souza represent opposite poles on the question of admission standards, and between September 1991 and March 1992 they conducted a series of debates sponsored by students from five different campuses which attracted large audiences. Fish acknowledges that the anecdotes to which D'Souza had recourse "give his polemic undoubted power", and the debates must have indeed been lively, to put it mildly, for he finds it important to state that "however harsh the accents either of us fell into on stage, our personal interactions were unfailingly cordial." He rather surprisingly affirms as well that the areas of agreement between them are wider than might have been expected. Certainly Fish's style in his writing is less acrimonious than D'Souza's, but perhaps that is to be expected, given their respective standpoints.

Eugene Goodheart, on his part, contends that political correctness has not been associated with the right, but the intolerance associated with PC can be found on the right in the world outside the academy. He calls attention to this intolerance in certain sections of the media and in the highest government circles, presumably referring to the likes of Lynne Cheney, and observes that

although political correctness on the left is not limited to the academy, the academy is nevertheless its natural home.⁵⁰

Clearly, however, not all members of the academic world completely identify either with or against political correctness and the problem of the academic who sees favourable elements in the arguments of both camps is formulated by Stimpson who bemoans the dilemma of "those who wish to pursue both polar goals." Their problem is that while they are conscious of the epistemological difficulties of each, they get lost in the wide-open territory between them, supporting either the principle of "representation" or of "merit." This tacit or overt labelling of one's position over PC issues is a common lament among commentators of political correctness and similar evidence was presented in Cameron's words previously.

Within society at large also there are, naturally enough, intermediate positions which, while recognising the very real inequalities in American society, nevertheless question whether universities have the right to lower their admission standards and teaching levels so that the disadvantaged can catch up, at the expense of the educational rights of abler students. One answer to this question is provided by Robert Hughes, who says the following:

If you believe that colleges ought to be training-grounds for elites, however broad-based access to them ought to be, then the answer has to be no. But the main current of opinion among teachers who came of age in the sixties or later, is passionately, almost reflexively, against elitism. "The prevailing ideology," wrote the educator Daniel J. Singal, 'holds that it is much better to give up the prospect of excellence than to take the chance of

injuring any student's self-esteem. Instead of trying to spur children on to set high standards for themselves, teachers invest their energies in making sure that slow learners do not come to think of themselves as failures... often one senses a virtual prejudice against bright students'.⁵²

Hughes is pointing to what he believes to be the reasons and origins underlying many teachers' concern to accommodate the havenots of American society into their colleges and universities. They reflect a basic philosophy of what education is, and what and whom it should serve. He also echoes the fears felt by many others at what is perceived to be a falling of standards in American education. These two positions are characterised by opposing stances in the PC debate. When the question is asked whether these two viewpoints are irreconcilable it would appear that they indeed are, borne out by opinions as reflected here by Stimpson and Cameron.

Members of the academic community have had to become aware of the speech code issue, whose relevance and importance to the topic of this dissertation invites close investigation. In the course of discussion of this issue the free speech clause of the First Amendment is frequently invoked, _nder which the right of the individual to say whatever he or she pleases except screaming "Fire!" in a crowded theatre is protected. Paradoxically, when referring to the political correctness debate it is most often invoked by people who show scant respect for other liberties, especially liberties with which they are basically in disagreement. Fish remarks that First Amendment rhetoric has been used to justify policies and actions such as pornography, sexist language and campus hate speech, which the left finds problematical if not abhorrent.

"natural" content but are filled with whatever content and direction one can manage to put into them." His argument is that "free speech" is just the name given to verbal behaviour that "serves the substantive agendas we wish to advance and we give our preferred verbal behaviors that name when we can, when we have the power to do so, because in the rhetoric of American life, the label 'free Speech' is the one you wish your favorites to wear." Free speech, therefore, according to this analysis, is not an independent value but a political prize, "and if that prize has been captured by a politics opposed to yours, it can no longer be invoked in ways that further your purposes, for it is now an obstacle to those purposes." Fish believes that the liberal left does not understand this and devotes the rest of the article to "an attempt to pry its members loose from a vocabulary that may now be a disservice to them." 53

Fish refers to "First Amendment pieties" to which people cling because they do not wish to face what they correctly take to be the alternative. That alternative is *politics*, the realization that decisions about what is and is not protected in the realm of expression will rest not on principle or firm doctrine but on "the ability of some persons to interpret -recharacterize or rewrite-principle and doctrine in ways that lead to the protection of speech they want heard and the regulation of speech they want heard and the regulation of speech they want silenced." Thus he maintains that when the First Amendment is successfully invoked, "the result is not a victory for free speech in the face of a challenge from politics but a *political victory* won by the party that has managed to wrap its agenda in the mantle of free speech."

Some of the campus incidents which led to the adoption of measures to combat them will now be mentioned, and they are taken from D'Souza's Illiberal Education. In 1987, at Purdue, a wooden cross was found doused with fuel but was not lighted because the perpetrators escaped to avoid discovery. Their aim had apparently been a burning in front of the Black Cultural Centre. At Northern Illinois University, white students in a pickup truck shouted insults at blacks who were attending a speech given by Jesse Jackson, and leaflets were tagged on campus buses which said "Niggers Get Out" and "Get Your Black Asses Back to Africa." The following year at Pennsylvania State University, job applications for minorities with multiple choice categories were distributed by somebody. Examples of these categories are: Source of Income: (a) theft, (b) relief, (c) welfare, and (d) unemployment; Place of birth: (a) charity ward, (b) cotton field, (c) back alley, (d) free clinic, and (e) zoo. At Yale University someone painted a swastika and the words "White Power" on the school's Afro-American Centre. Another incident was when a mock slave auction was held by members of the Zeta Beta Tau fraternity of the University of Winsconsin at Madison in which they painted their faces black and wore Afro-wigs. A further episode was when racist graffiti including some with the letters "KKK" was scrawled in the halls of Aurora College, west of Chicago.55

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Some campuses reacted by instituting "speech codes" designed to prevent racist, sexist, and other forms of reprehensible speech. One of the most restrictive of these codes was found at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor. The importance of the University of Michigan proceedings is evidenced

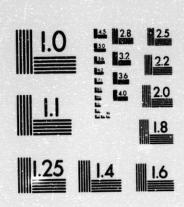
by the fact that in 1989 the Chronicle of Higher Education reported that various colleges and universities including Tufts, Brown, Penn State, California and Connecticut were patterning their codes of sanction on the Michigan model and that others such as Arizona State University, Eastern Michigan University and the University of Texas at Austin were considering censorship. The antecedents to the promulgation of its speech code, the code itself and some of its repercussions will be examined now, based upon the opinion of Judge Avern Cohen and cited in Arthur and Shapiro. 57

The policy outlawed conduct that "stigmatizes or victimizes" students on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, sex, sexual orientation, creed, national origin, ancestry, age, marital status, handicap or Vietnam-era veteran status. This came about as an attempt to curb what the University's governing Board of Regents regarded as a rising tide of racial intolerance and harassment on campus.

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a confidential memorandum to the university's executive officers outlining a proposal for a disciplinary policy designed to combat discrimination. The proposed policy prohibited "[h]arassment of anyone through word or deed or any other behavior which discriminates on the basis of inappropriate criteria." The Acting President was fully aware at the time that the proposed policy would cause serious argument over the First Amendment, but reasoned that

just as an individual cannot shout "Fire!" in a crowded theater and then claim immunity from prosecution for causing a riot on the basis of exercising his rights of free speech, so a great many American universities have taken the position that students at a university cannot by speaking or writing discriminatory remarks which seriously offend many individuals beyond the immediate victim, and which, therefore detract from the necessary educational climate of a campus, claim immunity from a campus disciplinary proceeding. I believe that position to be valid.⁵⁹

The Policy set up a three-tiered system whereby the degree of regulation was dependent upon where the conduct at issue had taken place, while publications sponsored by the University such as the *Michigan Daily* and the *Michigan Review* were not subject to regulation. The broadest range of speech and dialogue was "tolerated" in variously described public parts of the campus. Only an act of physical violence or destruction of property was considered sanctionable in these settings. However, although the conduct of students living in University housing is primarily governed by the standard provisions of individual leases, it seemed, notwithstanding, that the Policy also applied here. The policy by its terms applied specifically to:

[e]ducational and academic centers, such as classroom buildings, libraries, research laboratories, recreation and study centers. In these areas, persons were subject to discipline for:

- 1. Any behavior, verbal or physical, that stigmatizes or victimizes an individual on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, sex, sexual orientation, creed, national origin, ancestry, age, marital status, handicap or Vietnam-era veteran status, and that
- a. Involves an express or implied threat to an individual's academic efforts, employment, participation in University sponsored extracurricular activities or personal safety; or
- b. Has the purpose or reasonably foreseeable effect of interfering with an individual's academic efforts, employment, participation in University sponsored extra-curricular activities or personal safety; or
- c. Creates an intimidating, hostile, or demeaning environment for educational pursuits, employment or participation in University sponsored extra-curricular activities.
- 2. Sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and verbal or physical conduct that stigmatizes or victimizes an individual on the basis of sex or sexual orientation where such behavior
- a. Involves an express or implied threat to an individual's academic efforts, employment, participation in University sponsored extracurricular activities or personal safety; or
- b. Has the purpose or reasonably foreseeable effect of interfering with an individual's academic efforts, employment, participation in University sponsored extra-curricular activities or personal safety; or
- c. Creates an intimidating, hostile or demeaning environment for educational pursuits, employment or participation in University sponsored extra-curricular activities.⁶⁰

Provision was also made for the establishment of appropriate hearing

procedures under which any member of the University community could initiate the process leading to sanctions. There were two ways to do this, either by entering a formal complaint with an appropriate University office or by seeking informal counselling with certain University officials and support centres. The possible sanctions were based on the gravity of the transgression and were graded on a sliding scale. It was explicitly stated that the University encouraged hearing panels to impose sanctions to include an educational element "in order to sensitize the perpetrator to the harmfulness of his or her conduct." The Policy, however, considered that compulsory class attendance should not be imposed "in an attempt to change deeply held religious or moral convictions."

The nature of the sanctions imposed depended on three variables: the intent of the accused student, the effect of the conduct, and whether the accused student was a repeat offender, leading to the possible imposition of one or more of the following sanctions: (1) formal reprimand; (2) community service; (3) class attendance; (4) restitution; (5) removal from University housing; (6) suspension from specific courses and activities; (7) suspension; (8) expulsion. It was established that only violent or dangerous acts, repeated offences, or a willful failure to comply with a lesser sanction would warrant the sanctions of suspension and expulsion, and the University President was empowered to set aside or lessen any sanction. 62

The next step taken appears to have occurred in autumn 1988, soon after the promulgation of the policy, when the University Office of Affirmative Action issued an interpretive guide (Guide) entitled What Students Should Know

about Discrimination and Discriminatory Harassment by Students in the University Environment. The purpose of the Guide was to afford students with an authoritative interpretation of the policy and to provide concrete examples of sanctionable conduct to enable them to understand the Policy fully. These included the following illustrative examples:

A flyer containing racist threats distributed in a residence hall.

Racist graffiti written on the door of an Asian student's study carrel.

A male student makes remarks in class like "Women just aren't as good in this field as men," thus creating a hostile learning atmosphere for female classmates.

Students in a residence hall have a floor party and invite everyone on their floor except one person because they think she might be a lesbian.

A black student is confronted and racially insulted by two white students in a cafeteria.

Male students leave pornographic pictures and jokes on the desk of a female graduate student.

Two men demand that their roommate in the residence hall move out and be tested for AIDS.⁶³

There was, in addition, a separate section to the Guide entitled "You are a harasser when..." which gave further examples of discriminatory conduct as follows:

You exclude someone from a study group because that person is of a different race, sex, or ethnic origin than you are.

You tell jokes about gay men and lesbians.

Your student organization sponsors entertainment that includes a comedian who slurs Hispanics.

You display a confederate flag on the door of your room in the

residence hall.

You laugh at a joke about someone in your class who stutters.

You make obscene telephone calls or send racist notes or computer messages.

You comment in a derogatory way about a particular person or group's physical appearance or sexual orientation, or their cultural origins, or religious beliefs.⁶⁴

As can be seen from the above, the examples given are very specific, and their gravity of a widely differing import. The authors note that it is not clear whether each of these examples of actions would subject a student to sanctions, but nevertheless the title of the section suggests to them that they would.⁶⁵

The Policy and its enforcement was both imitated on other campuses, and also, as can be imagined, it led to widespread criticism and debate. One of the most notorious results was a court case in which proceedings were initiated by a graduate student in psychology who, wishing to remain anonymous to protect himself from adverse publicity, was referred to as "John Doe". His case is known as "Doe v. University of Michigan" and he considered that his activities and status at the University were such that he could challenge the validity of the Policy. Doe's specialty was the field of biopsychology and his fear was that "certain controversial theories positing biologically-based differences between sexes and races might be perceived as "sexist" and "racist" by some students and...that discussion of such theories might be sanctionable under the Policy." In an affidavit he confirmed that as a teaching assistant in Comparative Animal Behaviour, he deemed it

pertinent to discuss questions relating to sex and race differences, amongst which was included a certain hypothesis regarding sex differences in mental abilities. This hypothesis holds that "men as a group do better than women in some spatially related mental tasks partly because of biological difference. This may partly explain, for example, why many more men than women chose to enter the engineering profession." 67

Doe contended that as some students and teachers regarded such theories as "sexist" he feared that he might be charged with a violation of the Policy if he were to discuss them. In view of the fact that there had been precedents, when on at least three separate occasions students had been disciplined or threatened with discipline for comments made in classroom settings, the Court found that Doe had standing to challenge the policy. 68 Eventually the Court found that enforcement of the terms of the Policy was not valid for various reasons. In the first place, the University could not establish an antidiscrimination policy whose effect was to prohibit certain speech because it disagreed with ideas or messages sought to be conveyed. Neither could the University proscribe speech simply because it was found to be offensive, however gravely, by a great many people. The fact that this referred to a university setting made it all the more problematic since a "free and unfettered interplay of competing views is essential to the institution's educational mission."69 Doe also claimed, and his claim was upheld, that the Policy was invalid because of overbreadth. It is fundamental that statutes regarding First Amendment activities must be narrowly drawn to address only the specific evil in question. 70 The fundamental error of the Policy was that broad classes of

speech may not be prohibited, even if some of them are legitimately regulable, if in so doing a substantial amount of constitutionally protected conduct is also prohibited. Finally, Doe maintained that the policy was impermissibly vague, which is defined as when "men of common intelligence must necessarily guess at its meaning." A statute must give adequate warning of the conduct which is to be prohibited and must set out explicit standards for those who apply it. It was found that "students of common understanding were necessarily forced to guess at whether a comment about a controversial issue would later be found to be sanctionable under the Policy."

As can be seen, the First Amendment was invoked both in this case and by the Acting President when he first laid down the Policy. Yet Fish, as part of his argument against the invocation of the First Amendment, holds that it is the job of the First Amendment "to mark out an area in which competing views can be considered without state interference; but if the very marking out of that area is itself an interference (as it always will be), First Amendment jurisprudence is inevitably self-defeating and subversive of its own aspirations." Fish contended that at the moment of writing there was a greater rick in not attending to hate speech than the risk that by regulating hate speech "we will deprive ourselves of valuable voices and insights or slide down the slippery slope toward tyranny."

A crucial argument in discussion of speech codes or hate speech is that of the existence or not of neutrality, or as it is sometimes termed "viewpoint neutrality". This figures largely in the discussion by the philosopher Altman, who declares himself to favour certain narrowly drawn rules prohibiting hate

speech in the development of what he terms a liberal argument. As we have seen. Fish is sceptical of the liberals' grasp of the full implications of the speech code issue. Be that as it may. Altman defines the liberal position as steering a middle course "between those who reject all forms of campus hatespeech regulations and those who favor relatively sweeping forms of regulation."75 He has in common with those who reject all regulation that he agrees that rules against hate speech are not viewpoint-neutral; and with those who favour sweeping regulation he shares an acceptance of the claim that hate speech can cause serious psychological harm to those at whom it is directed. Notwithstanding this, he declares himself doubtful that such harm can justify regulation, sweeping or otherwise. Rather, some kinds of hate speech inflict on their victims a certain kind of wrong, and he believes that it is on the basis of this wrong that regulation can be justified. Altman's argument is that "[t]he kind of wrong in question is one that is inflicted in virtue of the performance of a certain kind of speech act characteristic of some forms of hate speech", and he contends that "rules targeting this speech-act wrong will be relatively narrow in scope. "76

The author typifies hate speech regulations as providing for disciplinary action against those students who make racist, sexist or homophobic utterances or who engage in behaviour that expresses these same kinds of discriminatory attitudes. Reflecting the consensus view on the origin of hate speech regulation he believes the stimulus for the regulations to have been an apparent upsurge in racist, sexist, and homophobic incidents on college campuses during the previous decade. He refers specifically to regulations on different campuses

which have actually been proposed or enacted and which vary widely in the scope of what they prohibit.77

An example of rules which are narrow in scope such as those in force at Stanford University are contrasted with the rules of the University of Connecticut, whose scope is relatively sweeping. At Stanford the rules require that speech meet three conditions before it falls into the proscribed zone:

the speaker must intend to insult or stigmatize another on the basis of certain characteristics such as race, gender, or sexual orientation; the speech must be addressed directly to those whom it is intended to stigmatize; and the speech must employ epithets or terms that similarly convey "visceral hate or contempt" for the people at whom it is directed.⁷⁸

In contrast, the rules of the University of Connecticut, as they were originally devised, were much narrower in scope. According to these rules, "every member of the University is obligated to refrain from actions that intimidate, humiliate or demean persons or groups or that undermine their security or self-esteem." The specific examples of proscribed speech explicitly mentioned were "making inconsiderate jokes,... stereotyping the experiences, background, and skills of individuals,... imitating stereotypes in speech or mannerisms [and] attributing objections to any of the above actions to 'hypersensitivity' of the targeted individual or group."⁷⁹

Altman is concerned to establish a distinction between the narrower forms of hate-speech regulations, such as are found at Stanford, and a simple prohibition of verbal harassment. He defines harassment as being commonly

understood to involve conduct that is intended to annoy a person to such an extent "as to disrupt substantially her activities. No one questions the authority of universities to enact regulations that prohibit such conduct, whether the conduct be verbal or not." There are three principal differences between hate-speech rules and rules against harassment. In the first place, "hate-speech rules do not require a pattern of conduct: a single incident is sufficient to incur liability." In the second place, hate-speech rules describe the offending conduct in language that refers to the moral and political viewpoint it expresses. "The conduct is not simply annoying or disturbing; it is racist, sexist, or homophobic." 80

The third difference, the most important one, is closely allied to the second, and it is that rules against hate speech are not viewpoint-neutral. Such rules depend on the conviction that racism, sexism, and homophobia are morally wrong.

The liberal principle of viewpoint-neutrality holds that those in authority should not be permitted to limit speech on the ground that it expresses a viewpoint that is wrong, evil, or otherwise deficient. Yet, hate-speech rules rest on precisely such a basis. Rules against harassment, on the other hand, are not viewpoint-biased. Anyone in our society could accept the prohibition of harassment because it would not violate their normative political or moral beliefs to do so. The same cannot be said for hate-speech rules because they embody a view of race, gender, and homosexuality contrary to the normative viewpoints held by some people.⁸¹

The title of Altman's article is Liberalism and Campus Hate Speech and his argument is that if his claim that hate-speech regulations are not viewpoint-neutral is correct, from a liberal perspective a strong prima facie case against them is raised. It so happens that viewpoint-neutrality does not simply entail a consideration of the effects of speech regulation on the freedom of various groups to express their views in the language they prefer. Also contained in the concept are the kinds of justification that must be offered for speech regulation. Any plausible justification of hate-speech regulation hinges on the premise that racism, sexism, and homophobia are wrong. Without that premise there would be no basis for arguing that the viewpoint-neutral proscription of verbal harassment is insufficient to protect the rights of minorities and women. "The liberal who favors hate-speech regulations, no matter how narrowly drawn, must therefore be prepared to carve out an exception to the principle of viewpoint-neutrality." 82

A common defence invoked in favour of campus hate-speech regulation centres around the argument that hate speech causes serious harm to those who are the targets of such speech. Chief among these harms are psychological ones. "Even when it involves no direct threat of violence, hate speech can cause abiding feelings of fear, anxiety, and insecurity in those at whom it is targeted". As Mari Matsuda has argued, "this is in part because many forms of such speech tacitly draw on a history of violence against certain groups". 83 It surely escapes nobody that the symbols and language of hate speech call to mind historical memories of violent persecution and consequently may encourage fears of current violence. Hence, as we have seen, the daubing of

swastikas, or the initials KKK. This is perhaps the most obvious kind of harm hate speech can cause, but a variety of other harms should not be forgotten, "from feelings of isolation, to a loss of self-confidence, to physical problems associated with serious psychological disturbance."84

Worrying though these consequences may be for liberals, these same liberals nevertheless baulk at the idea that they are a justification for hate speech regulations, because they sweep too broadly. This is their dilemma, for Altman believes that liberals find the regulation of racist, sexist, or homophobic speech couched in a scientific, religious, philosophical, or political mode of discourse, simply unacceptable. Yet, undoubtedly, these forms of hate speech can and do cause in minorities the harms enumerated above. So the liberal desirous of justifying any hate-speech regulation must needs find something beyond these kinds of harm. Typically one finds a defence, say, of neo-Nazi students complete with displays of swastikas and urges to ban Jews and/or blacks from the campus. This kind of conduct would be admitted in the name of the political context of the event on the grounds that it does at least have some significant value.

However, Altman points to a basic flaw with any effort to distinguish between regulable and nonregulable hate speech by appealing to the value of speech. Such appeals, he contends, invariably involve substantial departures from the principle of viewpoint-neutrality. There is no way to make differential judgments about the value of different types of hate speech without taking one or another moral and political viewpoint. Criteria such as these clearly illustrate this dilemma as they are heavily tilted against the values of

racists and sexists, and yet they do not "adequately address the question of how a liberal position can accommodate such substantial departures from viewpoint-neutrality."85

Another argument in favour of regulation, claims that there is a particularly narrow connection between hate speech and the subordination of minorities. "Thus, Charles Lawrence contends, 'all racist speech constructs the social reality that constrains the liberty of non-whites because of their race'. Along the same lines, Mari Matsuda claims, 'racist speech is particularly harmful because it is a mechanism of subordination'."86 Altman goes on to clarify and elaborate upon the position of Lawrence and Matsuda by using J.L. Austin's distinction between perlocutionary effects and illocutionary effects on the hearer. The perlocutionary effects of an utterance consist of its causal effects on the hearer. In Austin's words, "saying something will often, or even normally, produce certain consequential effects upon the feelings, thoughts, or actions of the audience, or of the speaker, or of other persons: and it may be done with the design, intention, or purpose of producing them."87 Thus a certain utterance may infuriate, persuade, or frighten the hearer, and so on. The illocutionary effect of an utterance, "in which way and in which sense we were on this occasion using it",88 on the other hand, consists of the kind of speech act performed in making the utterance: advising, warning, stating, claiming, arguing, and so on.

Altman understands Lawrence and Matsuda to be not simply suggesting that the perlocutionary effects of racist speech constitute harm. Nor are they simply suggesting that hate speech can persuade listeners to accept beliefs that

then motivate them to commit acts of harm against racial minorities. That again is a matter of the perlocutionary effects of hate speech. Rather, he believes that they are suggesting that hate speech can inflict a wrong in virtue of its illocutionary acts, the very speech acts performed in the utterances of such speech.⁸⁹

The true impact of this speech-act wrong is accounted for by Altman's suggestion that it is the wrong of treating a person as having inferior moral standing. "In other words, hate speech involves the performance of a certain kind of illocutionary act, namely, the act of treating someone as a moral subordinate." The treatment of persons as moral subordinates means treating them in a way that considers their interests to be intrinsically less important, and their lives inherently less valuable, than the interests and lives of those who belong to some reference group. Although there are many ways of treating people as moral subordinates that are natural as opposed to conventional, it is the status of these acts of subordination which depend solely on universal principles of morality and not on the conventions of a given society. Consequently we regard slavery and genocide, for example, as treating people as having inferior moral standing simply in virtue of the affront of such practices to universal moral principles.

There are other ways of treating people as moral subordinates which have both natural and conventional elements, and one example given by Altman is the practice of racial segregation. Here, two subordinating factors combine: the conditions imposed on blacks by such treatment violate moral principles, and also the act of separation is a convention for putting the minority group in

its (supposedly) proper, subordinate place.

I believe that the language of racist, sexist, and homophobic slurs and epithets provides wholly conventional ways of treating people as moral subordinates. Terms such as 'kike', 'faggot', 'spic', and 'nigger' are verbal instruments of subordination. They are used not only to express hatred or contempt for people but also to "put them in their place," that is, to treat them as having inferior moral standing.⁹¹

It follows from this that the primary verbal instruments for treating people as moral subordinates are the slurs and epithets of hate speech. Altman convincingly illustrates the difference between contemptuously calling someone a "faggot" and saying to that same person, with equal derision, "You are contemptible for being homosexual." As he points out, although both utterances may treat the homosexual as a moral subordinate, the former undoubtedly accomplishes it with much greater force than the latter. His belief is that this is achieved because the conventional rules of language make the epithet "faggot" a term whose "principal purpose is precisely to treat homosexuals as having inferior moral standing."

Altman makes the distinction between slurs and epithets uttered with that intention, and when the victimized groups adopt those same slurs which have historically subordinated them and "transvalue" the terms. This has occurred with the term "queer" used by some homosexuals not as a term of subordination, but on the contrary as one of pride. As he is at pains to establish, the wrongs of subordination based on race, gender and sexual preference, are historically among the principal wrongs that have prevented -

and continue to prevent- Western liberal democracies from living up to their ideals and principles. Writing as a liberal he acknowledges the particular need to combat such wrongs with strong support for laws prohibiting discrimination in employment, housing and public accommodations. He therefore justifies the regulation of speech-act subordination on campus within a liberal framework.

In general, what are needed are rules that prohibit speech that (a) employs slurs and epithets conventionally used to subordinate persons on account of their race, gender, religion, ethnicity, or sexual preference, (b) is addressed to particular persons, and (c) is expressed with the intention of degrading such persons on account of their race, gender, ethnicity, or sexual preference. With some modification, this is essentially what one finds in the regulations drafted by Grey for Stanford.⁹³

He is against the prohibition of more than slurs and epithets on the grounds of serious overinclusiveness, and prohibiting all slurs and epithets irrespective of the context in which they were uttered would constitute an intolerable degree of intrusiveness into the private lives of students. In this way, as has been demonstrated here, a powerful argument has been advanced from a liberal perspective for some form of campus speech code.

D'Souza, not a liberal, made the following pronouncement on the debate. "The efforts of the administration at Michigan and other schools to regulate and enforce a social etiquette have created an enormous artificiality of discourse among peers, and thus have become an obstacle to that true openness that seems to be the only sure footing for equality."

I shall now examine some of the implications that I consider to be of

note from the preceding discussion of the different positions in the debate over campus speech codes, in the light of their relevance to this dissertation. I find Altman's categorization of hate speech, as an intentional act which treats the individual as a person whose interests are less worthy or important than those of others, an enlightening perspective on the issue. Similarly enlightening, are the examples provided on previous pages of the Guides which the University of Michigan published for the benefit of the students. It appears that they epitomize many of the defects of political correctness that its opponents are so quick to decry.

In the first place the examples given are hugely disparate in degree, some of them being opinionable while others are not. For example, it would seem that a "racist threat" or "racist graffiti" are a very different matter from a remark from a male student that "women just aren't as good as men in this field". In the latter case, while recognising that it might well be perceived as "creating a hostile learning atmosphere for female classmates", this need not necessarily be so, as it could well be the sort of unthinking remark, uttered half in jest or to provoke. On the other hand, in some contexts it would just be true, regardless of the order of the terms of comparison.

As can be deduced from the attention paid to his article so far, I believe that Altman has made a valuable contribution to the debate, both because of the measured tone of his discussion and because he advances an interesting explanation for the basic wrong behind manifestations of hate speech.

It is my hope that this rather lengthy survey of some of the implications of the debate that the question of speech codes has provoked will have shown

that it is a most complex issue. Certainly, the fact that "correct" or acceptable vocabulary changes so fast that it is difficult for the uninitiated in the controversies of PC terminology to keep track of each new development, does little to help these uninitiated view PC in a kindly light. It is similarly true that many -not without reason- regard political correctness with suspicion, and hate speech rules as a covert way to curtail free speech under the guise of preventing sexual or racial harassment. As Roger Kimball puts it, the whole movement of hate speech regulation portends "nothing less than a new form of thought control based on a variety of pious new-Left slogans and attitudes." This idea of thought control inexorably reminds us of Orwell's fears about political manipulation via language, particularly as expressed in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Indeed, Orwell is constantly invoked, both expressly and tacitly, by opponents of PC.

Those whose business is shaping public opinion, ranging from professionals in publicity to the most insidious exploiters of propaganda following in the traces of Josef Goebbels, also know that one of the most effective ways of quashing the enemy is to ridicule him. Therefore, the comedy aroused by the absurdities and inelegancies of speech codes, neatly plays into the hands of the opponents of PC. Moreover, there undoubtedly is a dour, humourless attitude attached to the outrage expressed by advocates of PC about the issues that concern them, which in its turn makes them infinitely easy to parody and mock. As Lorna Weir points out, "PC consistently connotes rigidity and self-righteousness, the humourless enforcement of an orthodoxy that results in factionalism... The antithesis of PC, political

incorrectness, thus links with diversity, art, imagination, wildness, and transgression."96

However, while it is true that many of the aspects of the speech code issue do invite ridicule and derision, this should not mask the essential gravity of the problem. This problem cannot be formulated in simple terms as a dichotomy, pitting tolerance against bigotry. Oversimplification, platitudes, or disregard for the inferences involved, which characterize too much of the popular writing on the subject, do nothing to promote understanding of the difficulties that give rise to the political correctness controversies on college and university campuses.

In order to understand just how such a situation could arise, and to evaluate its possible influence elsewhere, we should bear in mind an essential difference between American universities and American society, and their European equivalents. American private higher education began in church-affiliated schools where it was normal practice to insist that faculty be denominationally correct, that is, that they be members of the church funding the institution. So, faculty who did not adhere to the religious doctrine which inspired their institution would often lose their appointments. However, some of these institutions changed, becoming less orthodox, and in retaliation the right-wing element of the churches established new schools. Thus, Yale was created to counter-balance the move towards Unitarianism of Harvard. It was not until the mid-nineteenth century that Jews and Catholics, for example, were employed in any great number, and many Abolitionists suffered for their beliefs in southern campuses and in some northern ones too.

But higher education is not conducted in a void, and reflects the society in which it exists. The history of the United States has been influenced by a sectarian religious ethos which has assumed -among other tenets- the perfectibility of humanity and the obligation to avoid sin. ⁹⁸ In contrast, the churches that most predominate in Europe, Canada, and Australia, recognize that people are inherently weak, impelling these churches and the polity to forgiveness and protection. American political behaviour has been greatly influenced by the values of its hundreds of sectarian churches, to the point that American "wars and ideological conflicts are conducted as battles between good and evil, and such conflicts engender demands for 'correctness'." Furthermore, there has been an emphasis on Americanism as a political ideology, and American liberals and conservatives, proffering their vision of the good society, have been steeped in an absolutist and utopian orientation. Accordingly, those who reject American values are incorrect, un-American, and may be denied rights. ¹⁰⁰

Viewed from this perspective, political correctness becomes yet another moralizing phenomenon in a tradition which is fundamentally different from its European counterpart. To be sure, many countries, including Britain, are fast becoming truly pluralistic in their composition, and count with vociferous gay lobbies. In this way they resemble the United States more than was previously the case. However, in Europe there is scope for left-wing *political* action, whereas in America this possibility does not exist and *theory* is practically the only domain of left-wing thought. For all these reasons it seems unlikely that the PC movement as experienced on American campuses, epitomised by the

hate speech controversy, will prosper on European campuses.

Nevertheless, as a rule, Europe appears only too anxious to ape America and American ways, and this is clearly manifested by the countries that have espoused many aspects of the American education system even after proven to be deeply flawed. Where the political correctness movement on the campus is making its presence felt beyond the shores of the United States, and will no doubt wield greater influence, is in the so-called "canon" debate. Underlying this debate is the function of the university, whose traditional role is called into question.

NOTES

- 1. See, amongst others, Paul Berman, (ed.) Debating PC: The Controversy Over Political Correctness on College Campuses. (New York: Dell, 1992).

 Dinesh D'Souza, Illiberal Education: The Politics of Race and Sex on Campus, (New York: Vintage, 1992).

 Jeffrey Williams, (ed.) PC Wars: Politics and Theory in the Academy, (New York: Routledge, 1995).

 John Arthur and Arny Shapiro, (eds.) Campus Wars: Multiculturalism and the Politics of Difference, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995).

 Stephen Richer and Lorna Weir, Beyond Political Correctness: Toward the Inclusive University, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995).

 Apart from these books numerous articles have appeared both in the daily and weekly press as well as in scholarly publications.
- 2. Stanley Fish, There's No Such Thing as Free Speech and It's a Good Thing, Too, (New York: Oxford University Press. 1994), p. 93.
- 3. John Annette, "The Culture War and the Politics of Higher Education in America", in Sarah Dunant, (ed.) *The War of the Words*, (London: Virago, 1994), p. 3.
- 4. John Searle, "Is There a Crisis in American Higher Education?" Partisan Review, vol. 60, Fall 1993, p. 693.
- 5. Michael Bérubé, Public Access: Literary Theory and American Cultural Politics, (London: Verso, 1994). p. 75.
- 6. Bérubé, Op. cit., p. 73.
- 7. D'Souza, Op. cit., p. xiv-xv.
- 8. Morris Dickstein, "Correcting PC", Partisan Review, vol. no. 24, 1993, p. 545.
- 9. Allan Bloom, "The Closing of the American Mind", in Arthur and Shapiro, Op. cit., p. 13.
- 10. Dickstein, Op. cit., p. 545.
- 11. Melanie Phillips, "Illiberal Liberalism", in Dunant, Op. cit., p. 35.
- 12. Op. cit., p. 47-48.

- 13. D'Souza, Op. cit., p. 225.
- 14. This has been remarked upon by Bérubé, Op. cit., p. 16: "Despite the innumerable factual errors and deliberate misstatements...there has as yet been no serious reassessment of D'Souza from his allies on the right not even so much as a strategic retreat, whereby one might say D'Souza got some of the story wrong but offers a worthy critique of academic extremism all the same."
- 15. Op. cit., p. 19.
- 16. John Annette, "The Culture War and the Politics of Higher Education in America", in Dunant, Op. cit., p. 7.
- 17. Op. cit., p. 2.
- 18. John Searle, "Postmodernism and the Western Rationalist Tradition", in Arthur and Shapiro Op. cit., p. 29.
- 19. Jeffrey Williams, Op. cit., p. 4.
- 20. Op. cit., p. 4.
- 21. Ibid., p. 4.
- 22. Ibid., p. 5.
- 23. William Phillips, "Against Political Correctness: Eleven Points" Partisan Review, vol. 60, Fall 1993.
- 24. Op. cit., p. 674.
- 25. Annette, Op. cit. p. 5.
- 26. Op. cit., p. 5.
- 27. Bérubé, Op. cit., p. 8.
- 28. Op. cit., p. 11.
- 29. Ibid., p. 11.
- 30. Ibid., p. 11.
- 31. *Ibid.*, p. 33.
- 32. Ibid., p. 107.
- 33. Ibid., p. 108.

- 34. Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962).
- 35. Bérubé, Op. cit., p. 108.
- 36. Op. cit., p. 50.
- 37. Chester E. Finn, "The Campus: An Island of Repression in a Sea of Freedom", in Francis Beckwith, and Michael E. Bauman, (eds.) Are You Politically Correct? (Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1993), p. 59.
- 38. Goodheart, Op. cit., p. 555.
- 39. John Searle, "The Storm over the University", in Berman, Op. cit., p. 108.
- 40. Op. cit., p. 118.
- 41. Lino A. Graglia, "Affirmative Discrimination", in Arthur and Shapiro, Op. cit., p. 149.
- 42. Stanley Fish, Op. cit., p. 63.
- 43. D'Souza, Op. cit., p. 24-58.
- 44. Fish, Op. cit., p. 63.
- 45. Op. cit., p. 63.
- 46. Op. cit., p. 63-64.
- 47. Ibid., p. 64.Owen, "None of the Above: Beyond the Myth of Scholastic Aptitude", (Boston: 1968).
- 48. Diane Ravitch "The War on Standards", *Partisan Review*, vol. 60, Fall 1993, p. 689.
- 49. Fish, Op. cit., p. 52.
- 50. Goodheart, Op. cit., p. 550-551.
- 51. Catharine R. Stimpson, "On Differences: Modern Language Association Presidential Address 1990", in Berman, Op. cit., p. 58.
- 52. Robert Hughes, Culture of Complaint, Op. cit., (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 63.
- 53. Fish, Op. cit., p. 102.

- 54. Op. cit., p. 110.

 See also Richard Delgado, "Campus Antiracism Rules: Constitutional Narratives in Collision", in Sandra Colliver, (ed.) Striking a Balance: Hate Speech, Freedom of Expression, and Non-discrimination, (Colchester: University of Essex, 1992), p. 288: "The First Amendment appears to stand as a formidable barrier to campus rules prohibiting group-disparaging speech. Designed to assure that debate on public issues is 'uninhibited, robust and wide open,' the First Amendment protects speech which we hate as much as that we hold dear. Yet, racial insults implicate powerful social interests in equality and equal personhood."
- 55. D'Souza, Op. cit., p. 132.
- 56. Op. cit., p. 146.
- 57. Arthur and Shapiro, Op. cit., p. 114-121.
- 58. Op. cit., p. 115.
- 59. Ibid., p. 115.
- 60. Ibid., p. 115-116.
- 61. Ibid., p. 117.
- 62. Ibid., p. 117.
- 63. Ibid., p. 117.
- 64. *Ibid.*, p. 117-118.
- 65. Ibid., p. 118.
- 66. Ibid., p. 118.
- 67. Ibid., p. 119.
- 68. Ibid., p. 119.
- 69. Ibid., p. 120.
- 70. Ibid., p. 120.
- 71. Ibid., p. 121.
- 72. Ibid., p. 121.
- 73. Fish, Op. cit., p. 114.

- 74. Op. cit., p. 115.
- 75. Andrew Altman, "Liberalism and Campus Hate Speech", in Arthur and Shapiro, Op. cit., p. 122.
- 76. Op cit., p. 122.
- 77. Ibid., p. 122.
- 78. Ibid., p. 122-3.
- 79. Ibid., p. 123.
- 80. Ibid., p. 123.
- 31. Ibid., p. 123.
- 82. Ibid., p. 124.
- 83. Mari Matsuda, "Legal Storytelling: Public Response to Racist Speech: Considering the Victim's Story" *Michigan Law Review*, 87, 1989, p. 2352.
- 84. Op. cit., p. 2352.
- 85. Altman, Op. cit., p. 125.
- 86. Op. cit., p. 126.
- 87. J. L. Austin, Op. cit., p. 101.
- 88. Op. cit., p. 99.
- 89. Altman, Op. cit., p. 126.
- 90. Op. cit., p. 126.
- 91. Ibid., p. 127.
- 92. Ibid., p. 127.
- 93. Ibid., p. 129.
- 94. D'Souza, Op cit. p. 156.
- 95. Roger Kimball, Tenured Radicals: How Politics has Corrupted Our Higher Education, (New York: Harper & Row, 1992), p. xvi.
- 96. Lorna Weir "PC Then and Now: Resignifying Political Correctness", in Stophen Richer, and Lorna Weir, Op. cit., p. 58.

- 97. For further discussion of this and the moralistic background of North America and its universities, see Seymour Martin Lipset, "Sources of Political Correctness on American Campuses", in Howard Dickman, (ed.) *The Imperiled Academy*, (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1993).
- 98. Op. cit., p. 72.
- 99. Ibid., p. 72.
- 100. Ibid., p. 72.

b) The literature faculty - the "canon" debate

While it was possible to hypothesize that the hate speech debate will not have great repercussions in a European university context, there is no basis for a similar confidence in regard to the literary canon. In view of the centrality of this issue to university departments concerned with the study of literature, many of which are in the process of revising or drawing up new courses, this chapter contains particularly abundant references and notes, as it is felt that there is a real need for documentation of the different positions advanced. Once again, it has to be stated that the questioning of the literary canon has given rise to the most acrimonious dispute. Toni Morrison, an acclaimed writer who is both black and female, bears witness to this: "What is astonishing in the contemporary debate [over the canon] is not the resistance to displacement of works or to the expansion of genre within it, but the virulent passion that accompanies this resistance and, more importantly, the quality of its defense weaponry."

Before examining the arguments on both sides of the debate, another, rarely mentioned, reason for the outcry over the questioning of the canon

should be recorded. It is a reason that has little to do with fine sounding topics such as philosophy, the "Other", or the impact of reading upon the mental and social health of future generations. In an article entitled "Why Do We Read?", Katha Pollitt contends that in present day America the underlying assumption behind the canon debate is that it is only the books on the list that are going to be read, and forgoing the canonical list would mean that no books would be read.² In her view, serious books other than textbooks will not be bought, or read, in any great numbers. There appears to be no doubt that reading is becoming increasingly displaced as a pleasurable activity. Television and home computers are perhaps the principal rivals of the book for the leisure time of young people. Avid readers, are already few and far between amongst the younger generations.³

In his provocative and impassioned book, *The Western Canon*, Harold Bloom bemoans the fact that exceedingly few of the students who now enter Yale have an authentic obsession with reading.⁴ He goes even further, in ostentatiously not directing his book at academics, giving as his reason that "only a small remnant of them still read for the love of reading." Acknowledgement of this state of affairs, with the sadness it causes those who hold the enjoyment of reading "good books" as one of the greatest pleasures in life, perhaps helps us to better understand the true dimension of the furore that has been created by canon revision.⁶

John Alberti crystallises this term, which usually refers to a revision of the New Critical canon. The issues are nothing if not familiar in the context of political correctness generally: In the nineteen-twenties critical authority for the evaluation and interpretation of literature was consolidated on college campuses in the hands of a small, demagogically homogeneous group of professors -mainly male, upper-class, from northern European Protestant backgrounds- who began to develop various strands of formalist and modernist literary theories into a set of critical principles that valorized formal complexity, self-conscious irony and aesthetic distance - the collection of aesthetic perspectives known as the "New Criticism".

Anthony Easthope, in his book *Literary into Cultural Studies*, claims that the study of literature in the nineteenth century replaced classical studies "because it could reach a newly active and threatening working class." Literature acquired a new social and political importance mainly because "it seemed able to support and guarantee a transcendental domain." Yet it was not until 1904, as Carey Kaplan and Ellen Cronan Rose point out, that the canon of English literature as understood in school syllabi, standard anthologies, and histories of literature, was established when Walter Raleigh drew up "a reading list for the first course in English Literature (as distinguished from English Language) taught in British Universities." The authors, whose thesis is that the current canon revision is an unremarkable phenomenon, support their view by indicating that this canon was not fixed, and unmovable. (This, as will presently be made clear, is often repeated by those who uphold canon revision.) The canon later admitted new genres such as the novel as well as whole new national literatures like the American.

John Searle prefers to include the canon in what he terms the "Western Rationalist Tradition" which he believes determines the content and the

methodology employed in higher education. While Searle sees clearly the role of the professor of physical chemistry, microeconomics, or medieval history to "advance and disseminate human knowledge and understanding", he nevertheless finds that "it is less obvious, but still intelligible, how standards of rationality, knowledge, and truth are supposed to apply to the study of fictional literature or the visual arts." 11 Notwithstanding his reservations, he accepts that the traditional assumptions underlying how these latter were studied and taught did conform with the mainstream Western Rationalistic Tradition. According to this Tradition "there were supposed to be intersubjective standards by which one could judge the quality of literary and artistic works, and the study of these works was supposed to give us knowledge not only of the history of literature and art but of the reality beyond to which they refer, if only indirectly."12 Those who seek to revise or "open up the canon" do so because they dispute the tenets held by academics who represent a specific class, gender, and ethnic group which have dominated American society and polity since the very foundation of that nation.¹³

Interpretations which minimise the novelty of the Canon debate, seek to place the issue in perspective, thereby making it appear to be less fraught, showing that there have always been similar disagreements. Thus, Stanley Fish comments how thirty years ago there was great turmoil at the inclusion in the curriculum of works that are now regarded as classics. The arguments then put forward were the same as those that are voiced today: "American literature is a political and not a properly aesthetic category; [...] its canon had not yet stood the test of time; [...] a focus on these new works would mean that older,

more established works would be neglected and forgotten."¹⁴ Another account explains the debate by conferring a cyclical character upon it, and considering it a manifestation of generational conflict.¹⁵ When it is regarded as an integral part of the mainstream of political life in the United States, it is seen as a generational conflict between older scholars determined not to relinquish an earlier, hard-won status, and younger colleagues striving to acquire a still unsecured place for themselves. Herbert Lindenberger considers that these are issues central to the professional lives of humanistic scholars in the modern university, pointing to:

[T]he process by which newly emerging groups seek to achieve status by transferring the aura emanating from the long-standing canonical texts to neglected texts identified with their gender and with their ethnic origins; the rule-bound swapping of texts that reproduces the swapping of favors and testing of power familiar throughout American political life.¹⁶

At this point, a more thorough examination of what both sides of the debate consider the canon to be and to entail, will permit a fuller understanding of the claims and counterclaims of each side, and the reactions of those who are not directly involved in university life, literature departments, or education policy. Defenders of the canon are often referred to as "traditionalists" and they consider that there are certain key works in the history of literature that epitomise all that is best in our civilisation. Harold Bloom justifies tradition, emphasizing that it is not simply a passive process of acceptance of what has always been considered great. There is a much more at stake: "Tradition is not

only a handing-down or process of benign transmission; it is also a conflict between past genius and present aspiration, in which the prize is literary survival or canonical inclusion."¹⁷

While Bloom is undoubtedly controversial in some of his claims and opinions, he nevertheless eloquently states the position of the traditional defenders of the canon on many points. A good example is his stance with regard to the vexed question of elitism, so often levelled against the proponents of the western canon: "Nothing is so essential to the Western Canon as its principles of selectivity, which are elitist only to the extent that they are founded upon severely artistic criteria." Edward Said, too, is emphatic in his belief that, far from trying to eschew elitism, a necessary condition for engagement with literature is to exercise choice based on certain pre-established criteria: "One of the great pleasures for those who read and study literature is the discovery of longstanding norms in which all cultures known to me concur: such things as style and performance, the existence of good as well as lesser writers, and the exercise of preference."

Upon the test for the canon, it is safe to say that there is unanimity on the part of those who defend it, with agreement that only a work that demands rereading will qualify for canonical inclusion. Yet this unanimity does not extend to what may be considered the mission of the canon, nor indeed to the purpose of the study of literature or of reading. In her discussion of why we read, Pollitt charts how many consider the purpose of reading to be, as she calls it, "medicinal". For her, the main aim of reading is "to produce a desirable kind of person and a desirable kind of society." For the conservatives

this would be "a respectful high-minded citizen of a unified society" while for the liberals it would be "a flexible sort," and for the radicals, "a subgroupidentified, robustly confident one."²⁰

According to Easthope, in his survey of the history of literary studies,

Matthew Arnold's definition of literature assumed a political role affirming

national harmony by way of effacing class conflict:

Study of the national literature, as a Victorian handbook for teachers of English says, will help 'to promote sympathy and fellow feeling among all classes' (cited Eagleton 1983, p. 25), a view still around many years later to be echoed in all innocence by E.D. Hirsch when he claims that the American national culture 'transcends dialect, region and social class'.²¹

Following this theory, in the United States the study of literature would be less concerned with keeping the working class in its place and rather more with ensuring upward social mobility according to individual merit. However, as Easthope points out, in both England and the United States, "studying literature was supposed to make you a better person, to develop your 'imagination' so you could enter imaginatively into the experiences of others, thus learning to respect truth and value justice for all." Easthope highlights the fallacy in this argument by citing George Steiner's comments on some of the men administering and masterminding concentration camps such as Auschwitz who had been trained to read Shakespeare and Goethe. If it has not been engaged upon before, there is an interesting investigation to be carried out on whether they were trained to read or to misread, in ways that served the

dominant political ideology.

Pollitt, in her forthright way, establishes what she believes the real problem to be:

[...] the canon debate is really an argument about what books to cram down the resistant throats of a resentful captive populace of students - and the trick is never to mention the fact that, under such circumstances, one book is as good, or as bad, as another. Because, as the debaters know from their own experience as readers but never acknowledge because it would count against all sides equally, books are not pills that produce health when ingested in measured doses. Books do not shape character in any simple way, if indeed they do so at all, or the most literate world would be the most virtuous instead of just the ordinary run of humanity with larger vocabularies. Books cannot mold a common national purpose when, in fact, people are honestly divided about what kind of country they want - and are divided, moreover, for very good and practical reasons, as they always have been.24

Harold Bloom is quite clear that close and long perusal and study of the canon will not have the influence of making one either a better or a worse person, a more useful or more harmful citizen.²⁵ Neither will the study of literature save any individual or improve any society. Bloom, who considers Shakespeare to be the pivotal point of the canon, nevertheless recognises that he "will not make us better, and he will not make us worse, but he may teach us how to overhear ourselves when we talk to ourselves. Subsequently, he may teach us how to accept change, in ourselves as in others, and perhaps even the final form of change."²⁶

In this respect, Bloom differs from many who support the continued existence of the Western Literary Canon, or at least from those who use the moral virtues they attribute to the reading of canonical works as an argument for their preservation. From the beginning of *The Western Canon* he is anxious to distance himself, on this count, from those who might otherwise be considered his associates: "I am not concerned [...] with the current debate between the right-wing defenders of the Canon, who wish to preserve it for its supposed (and nonexistent) moral values, and the academic-journalistic network I have dubbed the School of Resentment, who wish to overthrow the Canon in order to advance their supposed (and nonexistent) programs for social change."²⁷

Bloom constantly makes ironic reference in his book to this "School of Resentment", and in case his readers should be in any doubt, he specifically states that under this term he is alluding (amongst others) to: "Feminists, Marxists, Lacanians, New Historicists, Deconstructionists, Semioticians." It is these, he claims, who are responsible for the anti-canon movement in the literature departments on American college and university campuses. They have in common an ideology which Bloom expresses with the following sentence: "The cardinal principle of the current School of Resentment can be stated with singular bluntness: what is called aesthetic value emanates from class struggle." Aesthetics figures at the centre of Bloom's concerns and as will be seen presently, the idea of the value of aesthetics is vitally important to the conception both of literary studies, and, ultimately, to the very essence of the university itself.

So far the basic tenets of the arguments put forward by "traditionalists" in support of the preservation of the Western Canon have been discussed. Now the counterarguments will be examined, in an effort to understand what the advocates of political correctness seek to achieve. The examination starts from reference to the above quoted *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* by Thomas Kuhn, if only because his ideas so frequently form the basis of current literary theory. The Easthope reveals how Kuhn demonstrated that the scientific community normally accepts and works within a paradigm which represents a consensus about methods and ends. However, from time to time, "new evidence or contradictions within the paradigm accumulate until the paradigm itself falls into doubt." It is at this time that a crisis arises, "a return to 'first principles' and an intense interest in theory (for which there is no need while the paradigm rides high)." Consequently, the creation of a new paradigm is effected, theoretical questions cease to be of cardinal interest, and life in the scientific community reverts to its normal pattern.

Easthope's book, published in 1991, draws a parallel to what has occurred in the field of literature and literary criticism: "Something like this has happened in literary studies during the past two decades. Twenty years ago the institutionalised study of literature throughout the English-speaking world rested on an apparently secure and unchallenged foundation, the distinction between what is literature and what is not." The author explains this literary paradigm as constructed around five interlocking terms or features, two of which are concerned with method, the other three being the presumed object of study. These are:

- 1- a traditionally empiricist epistemology;
- 2- a specific pedagogic practice, the 'modernist' reading;
- 3- a field for study discriminating the canon from popular culture;
- 4- an object of study, the canonical text;
- 5- the assumption that the canonical text is unified.34

This paradigm conforms to the theory of New Criticism which Alberti describes as centripetal in function. That is to say that "it focused on a refinement of critical ideals and a concomitant narrowing of the literary canon."35 He sees this centripetal movement as a part of the elitism and securing of cultural privilege that is an integral component of the political context of New Criticism. Because of this centralizing tendency, New Critical methodology in terms of course offerings, anthologies and lists of examination texts in graduate schools became swiftly institutionalized.³⁶ Alberti's concern with literary theory is of a pedagogical nature, and he acknowledges that pedagogical theory was part of New Critical theory from the very start, in marked contrast with most recent literary criticism. This no doubt contributed to a great extent to the fact that most standard textbooks for introductory literature classes use New Critical techniques: "analysis of theme, tone, setting, imagery and irony as entities in and of themselves, with scant attention to social, historical or political context - or rather, with the assumption that social context is secondary to considerations of formal analysis."37

Alberti's views appropriately illustrate many of the essential differences between New Criticism and the criticism exercised by those to whom he refers

as "poststructuralists", who he admits strongly disagree on many issues. He considers, however, that "poststructuralist criticisms - whether they be deconstructionist. feminist. New Historicist, reader-response, poststructuralist Marxist - do share certain perspectives."36 Alberti states them as follows: "Rather than trying to achieve a consensus of how reading should work when done 'correctly,' or trying to settle on 'standards' of literary merit, these theorists explore why and how readings and evaluations differ as a function of social, gender and historical position."39 The author suggests that poststructuralists choose to analyse "what Barbara Herrnstein Smith calls 'contingencies of value'", preferring this approach to that of "using theory to arrive at a single index of literary value." Herrnstein Smith's work epitomises for Alberti "the general poststructuralist view that 'all value is radically contingent', being neither a fixed attribute, an inherent quality, nor an objective property of things but, rather, an effect of multiple, continuously changing, and continuously interacting variables."40

Bérubé takes up this idea of contingency, an "anti-foundationalist aspect of post-modernism", which he maintains is regarded as a "potentially liberating intellectual tool" because, by suggesting that our beliefs and practices are culturally contingent, they are "subject to ongoing revision, bound to no historical determinism." Bérubé also defends postmodernism from one of the attacks most frequently levelled against it, an attack that maintains that for postmodernism, there are no "facts". 42

As was indicated at the very beginning of this section, in Toni Morrison's words, the position adopted by the traditionalists is one of stalwart resistance to the different theories, be they the theories of poststructuralists, deconstructionists, postmodernists, or whatever. Edward Said summarizes many of the issues that are the object of debate and points to some of the flaws in the way the arguments are advanced:

A great deal of recent theoretical speculation has proposed that works of literature are completely determined as such by their situation, and that readers themselves are totally determined in their responses by their respective cultural situations, to a point where no value, no reading, no interpretation can be anything other than the merest reflection of some immediate interest. All readings and all writings are reduced to an assumed historical emanation. Here the indeterminacy of deconstructive reading, the airy insouciance of postaxiological criticism, the casual reductiveness of some (but by not means all) ideological schools are principally at fault.⁴³

The arguments described above are nothing less than anathema to many supporters of the literary canon, and receive extraordinarily hostile reactions. These range from derision to incredulity, to exasperation and wrath. Thus, Harold Bloom suggests that the problem stems from a lack of definition apparently endemic to disciplines associated with literary studies which makes them an easy prey to any new fad that presents itself. In a popular and widely read book, Roger Kimball is sarcastic and dismissive, believing that many university professors espouse ridiculous and even dangerous causes. In a revealing phrase he ridicules the activities of some university literature departments: "The very idea that the works of Shakespeare might be indisputably greater than the collected carroons of Bugs Bunny is often rejected

as antidemocratic and an imposition on the freedom and political interests of various groups." (Emphasis added.) Indeed, it is phrases such as this one that do much harm to popular opinion about literary practice identified with political correctness. Said, a respected scholar in intellectual and university circles, does not have recourse to cartoon figures, but nevertheless makes a devastating criticism of the attitudes of some literary theorists: "What has been most unacceptable during the many harangues on both sides of the so-called Western canon debate is that so many of the combatants have ears of tin, and are unable to distinguish between good writing and politically correct attitudes, as if a fifth-rate pamphlet and a great novel have more or less the same significance."

However, there are also attempts to lower the heat of the debate, and by minimizing the repercussions of the issues of the conflict, Searle attempts to put it into perspective: "There are, indeed, many problems in the universities, but for the most part, they tend to produce silliness rather than catastrophe. The spread of 'poststructuralist' literary theory is perhaps the best known example of a silly but noncatastrophic phenomenon." Nevertheless, so much attack on politically correct practice in literature departments, must stem from a very real perception of malaise. This malaise is founded on alarm on two fronts. When Bérubé writes "we've found that 'proof' is a more slippery thing than we'd thought - something that depends more on rhetoric, power, persuasion and consensus than on 'incontrovertible fact', 48 these words in effect appear to subvert one of the most dearly held tenets with regard to "truth". The canon, for its supporters, is made up of works that are considered

to be indisputably great, masterpieces of literature which have something important to convey to people of any condition and origin. But when the existence of proof, and consequently truth, is called into question, the carpet seems to be pulled away from under the feet of the supporters of the canon. However, the fact that we may not be able to prove some truths does not necessarily mean that there is not a truth to be proved.

Furthermore, the possible repercussions are exacerbated by the belief that such questioning is not confined to a few, but is, on the contrary, common to university departments all over the land. Kimball's *Tenured Radicals* was published in 1990, and as a best seller over many months, contributed greatly to the growing alarm:

We know something is gravely amiss when teachers of the humanities confess - or, as is more often the case, when they boast - that they are no longer able to distinguish between truth and falsity. We know something is wrong when scholars assure us - and their pupils - that there is no essential difference between the disinterested pursuit of knowledge and partisan proselytizing, or when academic literary critics abandon the effort to identify and elucidate works of lasting achievement as a reactionary enterprise unworthy of their calling. And indeed, the most troubling development of all is that such contentions are no longer the exceptional pronouncements of a radical elite, but have increasingly become the conventional wisdom in humanities departments of our major colleges and universities.⁴⁹

That a book on a topic such as Kimball's should have become a best

seller, surprised not a few. Yet the terms to which he has recourse, befitting the language of many best sellers, often verge on the incendiary, exemplified in phrases which refer to "the decadence besetting the academy" and to the humanities "corrupted, willfully misunderstood, or simply ignored." 50

Terms such as these, coupled with striking contrasts such as the Bugs Bunny/Shakespeare dichotomy illustrated above, make for easy catch phrases, which may or may not strictly represent reality. In the general public's consciousness, however, this is what is happening in universities throughout North America, and its extent is, in effect, irrelevant. What is important is that basic tenets of Western civilization are seen to be undergoing a process of subversion carried out by precisely those whose mission is commonly perceived to be that of supporting and furthering a great and glorious tradition.

It is the case, however, that not everyone is agreed upon the positive values of this tradition, and indeed many profoundly object to the connotations that accompany it. Searle describes the change that has lately been wrought in the conception of Western Civilization: "Traditionally, the humanities thought of themselves as conserving, transmitting, and interpreting the highest achievements of human civilization in general and Western civilization in particular. This view is now regarded as elitist, and there has now been a general abandonment of the idea that some works are qualitively better than others." Searle considers that the commitment to truth and intellectual excellence is absolutely central to the Western Rationalistic Tradition. Once this commitment is denied, however, "it seems arbitrary and elitist to think that some books are intellectually superior to others, that some theories are simply

true and others false, and that some cultures have produced more important cultural products than others. On the contrary, it seems natural and inevitable to think that all cultures are created intellectually equal."52

"Elitism" is a principle that Searle, unlike others, does not attempt to eschew. On the contrary, he regards education as inevitably "elitist" and "hierarchical" because its aim is to encourage and enable the student "to discriminate between what is good and what is bad, what is intelligent and what is stupid, what is true and what is false." As has already been seen, concepts such as "truth", "falsity", "goodness" and "badness", however, do not enjoy universal acceptance. Harold Bloom considers elitism to be an intrinsic part of every canon and his diagnosis is that the "School of Resentment" suffers from a kind of "elitist guilt" in rejecting the Western Canon and all that it stands for.⁵⁴

Apart from the charge of elitism that is levelled against the canon, there is also the accusation that this elitism, and by extension the canon itself, are essentially undemocratic.⁵⁵ It is relatively easy to understand why, if one takes into account the principles of elitism upon which the canon is based. Elitism necessarily excludes all those works that do not attain the required quality of excellence, and, moreover, remain inaccessible for those whose background, education, or intellectual faculties, do not allow them to appreciate the values embodied in any canonical work. One can doubtless find this type of student in Alberti's reference to a "noncanonical" student body, which includes older students, women, working-class students, and those who belong to ethnic minorities.⁵⁶ The content of courses is Easthope's concern in his

calls for cultural studies based upon the democratic principle "that the discourses of all members of a society should be its concern, not just those of an educated elite." ⁵⁷ Furthermore, Easthope believes that since the literary canon is separated from the texts of popular culture it reaffirms the cultural distinction already in existence. This distinction, particularly marked in literary studies, brings about a kind of segregation, with two categories, formed by aesthetics on one side and the rest of life on the other. ⁵⁸

Both Easthope and Alberti represent the latter category while Harold Bloom belongs very firmly to the former. He, too, underlines the existence of a polarity of aesthetic values, on the one hand, and "only the overdeterminations of race, class, and gender", on the other. He is convinced that a choice has to be made, since "if you believe that all value ascribed to poems or plays or novels and stories is only a mystification in the service of the ruling class, then why should you read at all rather than go forth to serve the desperate needs of the exploited classes?"59 Presumably Bloom is alluding to what were once called "drawing-room socialists" when he derides the idea that to read a work written by "the insulted and injured" rather than to read Shakespeare, in some obscure way benefits the group to which they belong.60 Bloom is an unwilling witness to the destruction, in the name of social justice, of all intellectual and aesthetic standards in the humanities and the social sciences. In alluding to the procedure whereby in these disciplines a quota system is in force to encourage the presence of faculty from minority groups, he establishes a contrast with the situation of brain surgeons or mathematicians upon whom no quotas are imposed, and concludes that "what

has been devaluated is learning as such, as though erudition were irrelevant in the realms of judgment and misjudgment." In Bloom's opinion the current fashion in the academic world is "idealism," which has led to the abandonment of "all aesthetic and most intellectual standards [...] in the name of social harmony and the remedying of historical injustice."

Robert Hughes believes that the current fashion is to judge art in political terms and considers that the probable explanation for this fashion, is that it is the easy way to teach. Taught in this way, art becomes easily quantifiable, making judgement simple and straightforward:

It revives the illusion that works of art carry social meaning the way trucks carry coal. It divides the sprawling republic of literature neatly into goodies and baddies, and relieves the student of the burden of imaginative empathy, the difficulties of aesthetic discrimination. It enables these scholars, with their tin ears, schematized minds and tapioca prose, to henpeck dead writers for their lack of conformity to the current fashions in "oppression studies" - and to fool themselves and their equally nostalgic colleagues into thinking that they are all on the barricades.⁶³

In relation to the view of art as transcended by social factors, Bloom raises an interesting point: once the hypothesis is accepted that literary canons are the products only of class, racial, gender, and national interests, then, logically, the same is also true for all other aesthetic traditions. These include music and the visual arts, but Bloom's questions why literature in particular is especially vulnerable to the onrush of our contemporary social idealists. He

himself furnishes a possible explanation which reflects the opinion of society in general. This opinion is based upon the common assumption that the production or the comprehension of imaginative literature requires less knowledge and less technical skill than do the other arts.⁶⁴

Bloom in no way considers the defence of the Western Canon to be equated with a defence of the West, let alone a nationalist enterprise. As he puts it: "if multiculturalism meant Cervantes, who could quarrel with it?" His quarrel is with "the greatest enemies of aesthetic and cognitive standards [,] purported defenders who blather to us about moral and political values in literature."65 Obviously, when Bloom and others think in terms of enemies of aesthetic and cognitive standards they are highly disturbed at what they perceive to be a lowering of standards, both in learning and in aesthetic appreciation. This perception is undoubtedly very widespread in contemporary democracies. As Nina King makes clear, "critics of curricular innovation believe the radical relativism of deconstructionism gives rise to an 'anything goes' attitude that undermines traditional hierarchical standards and makes Zora Neale Hurston or Toni Morrison or Louis L'Amour the equal of Shakespeare or Milton."66 King offers the deconstructionists' response to similar charges, which maintains that there are no absolute 'standards' but each age, culture, or 'interpretive community' arrives at its own.⁶⁷ To add to the general atmosphere of mistrust and confusion, King notes, "the deconstructionists are also criticized for supporting the political agendas of leftist, minority, feminist, and homosexual activists. And all these groups are suspected of trying to indoctrinate students. "68

In the discussion about euphemism it was seen that following in line with Gresham's Law, the "good" use of money becomes superseded by the "bad" one. Bloom, too, invokes Gresham's Law, but in this case the variant is related to writing. According to him, "bad writing drives out good, and social change is served by Alice Walker rather than by any author of more talent and disciplined imagination." Yet it is not only the upholders of the canon who bemoan the decline into mediocrity, for Todd Gitlin, who argues for a "loose canon" as opposed to a "tight" one, laments the "stupidification" of students. He nevertheless believes that this cannot be solely attributed to shifts in the canon since "cultural illiteracy" has entered the educational process through a wide range of causes. Gitlin may be considered a sceptic as regards the traditional canon, but this is no barrier to his regret over the appallingly large number of students both in average higher education schools and in elite institutions,

who are amazingly uneducated in history, literature and the fundamentals of logic, [and] who don't know the difference between an argument and an assertion. There is a know-nothing mood in some quarters that refuses to understand that the ideas and practices of many a dead white male have been decisive in Western - and therefore world - history.⁷⁰

Searle declares that intellectual excellence as an ideal is implicit in the canon itself, and this ideal of excellence, he believes to be perceived as a threat by those who dispute the canon. They contend that rather than intellectual excellence, considered "elitist" and "hierarchical", considerations such as

"fairness, representativeness, the expression of the experiences of previously underrepresented minorities, etc.", should take precedence over the concept of excellence. Predictably, this question of excellence extends not only to the canon debate, but further afield to the humanities in general, and even as far as the whole concept of what higher education is, or should aspire to become. Searle feels that the "tradition" cannot be considered a unified phenomenon, "and properly taught, it should impart a critical attitude to the student, precisely because of the variety and intellectual independence of the works being taught, and the disagreements among them." He freely admits that the humanities have a political dimension, but limits this dimension to the political consequences entailed, which are a part of everything else. What Searle is not prepared to accept is that this political dimension of the humanities, (shared too music, art, gastronomy and sex, as well as mathematics, philosophy, and physics) means "that the only, or even the principal criteria for assessing these efforts should be political ones."

Up until now, the discussion of the canon debate has made repeated reference to the views of John Searle and Harold Bloom as representative of positions in favour of the literary canon. However, they are couched in strikingly different ways. Searle's opinions are valuable because he is not a member of any literature department, and as professor of philosophy at the Berkeley campus of the University of California, he appears to have no vested interest in the outcome of the debate. His articles on the subject of the canon are elegant and restrained, his arguments presented with subtlety. Bloom's position and style are in total contrast. *The Western Canon* is the work of a

person committed to a tradition, and deeply affected by the way he perceives literature to be going. The Western Canon must surely provoke controversy—that probably was one of the author's prime intentions—but whether one agrees with him or not, his views have the virtue of honesty, brilliance and forthrightness, and because he is so alarmed by the loss of values he cherishes, he expresses his opinions in terms that may sometimes offend. Bloom makes no concessions to political correctness, either in the opinions expressed or in the language he uses.⁷⁴

Underlying all Bloom's contentions is the belief that proper appreciation and criticism of books, be they great literature or works of lesser merit, is not a gift accorded to all. Neither is it a commodity that can be passed on to others.75 This attitude is of profound significance for university departments, for, in practice, what he proposes would result in higher education, at least in the field of literature, only for a very select few.76 Aesthetics guides everything, and only those capable of appreciating the insights afforded by great literature, which cannot be achieved without very extensive and intensive reading, should become students of literature at prestigious institutions of learning.77 Bloom cites "the sublime Oscar Wilde" who affirmed that "art is perfectly useless", and he reminds us that Wilde "also told us that all bad poetry is sincere."78 These simple words, as Bloom is well aware, are a truly devastating condemnation of the politically correct view of literature, or "texts" which is the preferred term. It is also exceedingly difficult to imagine any author whose life, wit, and literary testament are less politically correct than those of Oscar Wilde.79 Implicit in Wilde's aphorism is the message Bloom is sending to the canon revisionists: to take sincerity as a criterion upon which to judge written discourse, is to be condemned to accepting substandard literature, and to seek a social purpose in literature is not to understand the very meaning of art.

If Bloom unashamedly champions elitism and exclusiveness, the PC vision of higher education is diametrically opposed to this conception. Higher education is seen as having always been the domain of the powerful, and power historically in North American society, has rested in the hands of white males. From this fact stems the reaction against Dead White European Males (DWEMs).80 Thus, because the very producers of literature in America (the authors) are overwhelmingly members of a sex, (male) a race, (European) and a class, (middle or upper) it is only their vision of the world that is reproduced and subsequently read. In this way the existing power structure is not only unchallenged but is reinforced. It is felt that if this power imbalance, dating back to before the foundation of the nation, were to some extent to be redressed, it would make for a less unjust society. Henry Louis Gates Jr., the editor of the Norton Anthology of Afro-American Literature, understands this to be so: "We pay homage to the marginalized and demonized, and it feels almost as if we've righted an actual injustice."81 Because we read about the world through the vision of DWEMs, who are the repositories of "Great Literature", any other version of the world is considered second rate. A democratic reading of literature, therefore, must take into account, and take into account fully, all sectors of society.82

It would be naive to suppose that the uproar caused by this questioning

of the canon represents solely the view of committed guardians of the treasures of our civilization. Whether they admit it or not, undoubtedly some of the fiercest opponents of canon revision express their alarm and displeasure out of a fear of finding their own prestige roles in society undermined. Similarly, if the literary canon provokes so much discussion, it is because of the central role literature has traditionally played in the education system. Marilyn Friedman considers that the Western canon has very severe deficiencies. However, because it represents the power structure of North America, she believes it is most important that students in the United States be required to be familiar with at least some of it: "The Western canon articulates the values that rationalize U.S. government and that predominate in U.S. culture. The influence of those institutions is virtually inescapable for anyone who lives in the United States. Education in the United States should certainly acquaint its students with the government and culture that dominate U.S. life. **34*

The first to seriously challenge the status quo were feminists demanding that women's voices be heard and considered. While there is no real uniformity in feminists' demands or in the extent of their grievances, there is nonetheless a widespread insistence on a different quality that women's experience confers to the transmission of their view of life. This is equally felt by members of ethnic minorities, and the feminist challenge was followed by pressure from ethnic groups laying claim to the need to value their experience within society and their subsequent vision of life and of literature. Precisely because they start from different tenets, they also insist on a different analysis of literature, valuing aspects not deemed of great interest

to the canon makers, - contingency, as we have seen, and the social circumstances surrounding the creation of a work in question, for example - and placing less importance on concepts held sacred in canon literature, notably aesthetics and objectivity. Jane Tompkins clarifies the position assumed by reader-response criticism:

The New Critics had objected to confusing the poem with its results in order to separate literature from other kinds of discourse and to give criticism an objective base for its procedures. [...] The later reader-response critics deny that criticism has such an objective basis because they deny the existence of objective texts and indeed the possibility of objectivity altogether. [...] The net result of this epistemological revolution is to repoliticize literature and literary criticism. When discourse is responsible for reality and not merely a reflection of it, then whose discourse prevails makes all the difference.⁸⁷

As can be seen, this outlook asserts the political nature of all discourse, a basic precept denied by upholders of the canon. Indeed, as Bracken points out, it is upon this question that the defence mounted by the traditionalists is weakest, for they act by attempting to camouflage the fact that they also defend ideological positions. They claim that the so-called "traditional curriculum" is value free and ideologically entirely neutral. Bracken considers this has "sometimes proven to be a clever dialectical move" (particularly as employed in the social sciences), as "the innovators are forced to start out trying to avoid the charge that *their* novelties are simply part of *their* ideology. Thus, the defenders of the traditional curriculum are 'one up' on their critics."

However, in the present dispute, the upholders of the traditional curriculum or the canon, have lost their advantage. The insistence that the traditional liberal arts curriculum has been completely steeped in ideology and continues to be so, has proved a powerful argument. Furthermore, "by the clever use of antiracist, profeminist, and the like, rhetoric, the revisionists have put the traditionalists very much on the defensive. As a consequence, the traditionalists are exposed as advancing, now and in the past, their own political agenda."90 Bracken is convinced 'that they had and have such an agenda', but he believes 'that they should be able to mount rational defenses of their positions. What has happened and is happening now, in his view, is that they "prefer to appeal to their alumni, legislators, and the media to make war against this new subversive, if not Red, menace in our midst."91 Bracken's opinion is that defences in the academic world are usually "turf -preservation /-expansion moves", and he considers that one of the main weaknesses of the traditionalists' position is that they are not "historically informed enough to know that curricula were already the ever-changing products of ideological disputes in the medieval universities."92 Indeed, one finds time and again just such a blind spot on the part of the upholders of the canon. It certainly seems to be a mistaken position to adopt, being as it is, so easily refutable.93

Yet not all observers are as critical of the negative effects for the traditional cause. Jung Min Choi and John Murphy in *The Politics and Philosophy of Political Correctness*, believe that conservatives have disguised their political programme as a concern for morals and other cultural ideals. In this way, what is basically a completely political discussion is portrayed as

being solely high culture, which moves in an "apparently rarefied and depoliticized arena." The authors cite Foucault to demonstrate that a political viewpoint can be reinforced with little opposition, and go on to claim that from this manoeuvre the American public has been convinced that conservatives are prudent and pragmatic, while liberals are intellectual and social radicals.⁹⁴

Questioning the precepts of the canon stems from a deep and fundamental insistence on the necessity of changing the essence and function of literature within society, as Lindenberger explains:

Within contemporary America the attempt to find a place for women and ethnic writers within the canon [...] is part of a wider project to rethink the whole nature of what constitutes literature and its uses. Where are the borderlines, we are asking these days, between those texts we have customarily labeled literature and other texts within our culture? What forms of knowledge and social practice can or should we expect the literature we read to instill in us and in those students whose educational development we take it upon ourselves to shape? How is it, in fact, that the way we define and evaluate literature has become inextricably linked to what we perceive as educational needs? Fundamental questions such as these are raised only at those times, such as our own, when many have lost confidence in what was a long-accepted canon of great works. 95

One of the problems that arise from this approach is that upholders of the canon are distressed that what they consider to be mediocre works are read and studied in preference to works they believe to be intrinsically better.⁹⁶ In denying the dichotomy of good, versus bad writing, of imaginative versus derivative writing, and of intrinsic value in any writing, by only considering a text within the contingencies of its creation and its readers, those who contest the value of a literary canon have come a long way from the traditional concept of literature. Barry Sarchett defines how this interest in and regard for "contingency" is reflected in the humanities department, and more specifically for literary studies, in the following terms:

The postmodern turn [...] requires that we pay as much attention to who is speaking and who is not authorized to speak as we do to what is being spoken. It requires a sense therefore that all knowledge and values depend on power differentials: some voices have cultural power to define good and bad, high and low, true and false, while others must live inside those definitions because they are relatively voiceless. When people talk about what is true or false, good or bad, the postmodern response is to pose more questions: better or worse for whom? In what context? For what purposes?

Logically, the new precepts have resulted in new practice, offering in their turn, new insights to their practitioners. Sarchett reveals some of them in his article, including new forms of reading which expose, for example, the way that certain patriarchal notions of gender roles have been generally accepted as 'universal' in many of central cultural texts. This has given rise to the discovery of texts which had been ignored previously and has also led to the production of new forms of literature and history in which opinions which did not previously have a voice attempt to achieve an appropriate

language and vocabulary with which to articulate themselves. Sarchett perceives the insights afforded by this new focus as a most positive experience, particularly because of its stimulus to reflection on the part of students and teachers upon classroom practice itself. He endorses the new questions being asked about assumed values in selecting and evaluating texts.⁹⁸

Alberti is less sure about how classroom practice reflects the ideology of political correctness. He concedes that the names of some of the authors being read are different but believes that "close reading" techniques are employed "as part of an analysis and appreciation of the formal complexity of those texts." The reason is that literary merit is still defined in New Critical terms, resulting in two possible outcomes in the classroom:

Either texts by women, working class, and minority writers are taught to show that these writers can write "just as well" as the traditional canonical writers (since their previous exclusion from the canon suggests that they were somehow deficient), or texts are chosen in order to be 'representative' - a strategy that can lead either to reductionism (Kate Chopin provides the 'women's' perspective), tokenism or often both. In other words, unless changing what we read involves changing how we read, we will not be able to articulate the difference made by reconstructing American literature or by studying texts previously absent in the classroom - indeed, we will not be able to account adequately for that absence by any other means but by those critical-pedagogical ideas that 'justified' that absence in the first place. 100

One way to achieve the goals marked is by insisting on the importance

about 'understanding poetry' in general" and with "standardized texts and anthologies featuring the traditional 'classics'". He admits that this approach may appear to be a more arduous and time-consuming one, but believes that "this focus on context provides a flexibility and sensitivity ... [which] are the pedagogical strengths of the approaches discussed". The emphasis on sensitivity is cardinal and will be examined in the next section as one of the most important precepts of political correctness.

In his account of PC in America, D'Souza devotes an entire chapter to the canon, with a heading that leaves no doubt as to his views: "The Last Shall Be First: Subverting Academic Standards at Duke". He takes Duke University, whose members "demonstrate open contempt for the notion of a 'great book'", to exemplify everything that he understands to be wrong about the study of the humanities in the United States of the late eighties and early nineties. 102 D'Souza refers to Duke faculty such as Stanley Fish, Barbara Herrnstein-Smith, Frank Lentricchia, Frederic Jameson and Jane Tompkins, as "fashionable scholars", and remarks that although they represent different tendencies, including deconstructionism, postmodernism, structuralism, poststructuralism and reader-response theory, they nevertheless share a common objective; namely, to expose what they believe to be the facade of objectivity and critical detachment particularly in fields such as law, history, and literature. 103 As an example of the ideas they represent, he cites Barbara Herrnstein-Smith, a former president of the Modern Language Association, as saying that no standard, knowledge, or choice is objective, and that even Homer as a product of a specific culture, would not be very interesting to certain cultures. 104

D'Souza explains how, as the traditional idea of neutral standards was associated with a white male faculty at American universities, "minority and feminist scholars have grown increasingly attached to the *au courant* scholarship, which promises to dismantle and subvert these old authoritative structures." He alleges they consider it a means to alter the structure and content of what is taught in the classroom. Moreover it is also a source of academic rewards, in terms of jobs and promotion. D'Souza mentions as well how the new scholarship makes a critique of democracy, free markets, due process, "those institutions and procedures of liberal society [...] that seem to hinder social progress, understood as an expanded egalitarian franchise." 107

When researching the material for his book, D'Souza visited different campuses, and, among other research techniques, he interviewed various people. One of those he interviewed at Duke was Henry Louis Gates Jr. and D'Souza quotes parts of the interview directly. He writes of Gates that in contrast to "some of the more radical critics of the standard curriculum [...] he does not want to throw out the idea of a canon." Gates declared that an alternative minority canon of works should be developed "that could be taught alongside the classics of European culture." Consequently the Norton Anthology of Afro-American Literature, which Gates edited, "is intended as a standard textbook on black writers." According to D'Souza, Gates admitted to being much more conservative than his colleagues because he does believe that some works are better than others:

'Some texts, black or white, use language that is more complex,

more compelling, richer. I'm not in favor of Chinese lantern literature: you know, paper thin and full of hot air. I believe we can find works by blacks that are complex and reflect layers of experience otherwise scarce, otherwise ignored'. He sighed. 'My friends on the left think I'm hopeless'. Fortunately, he said, they dare not attack him very fiercely. 'You can't criticize black people too much or you'll be called a racist'. 109

Gates believed that it is vital for black scholars to work together with feminists in order to develop the alternative canon. D'Souza also quotes him as reasoning that if women are allies of blacks, the market for black literature will be extended to include white women, and thus a reciprocal need has been created. 110

While at Duke, D'Souza also interviewed Stanley Fish, with whont, as indicated earlier, he was engaged in a series of debates on five different campuses. He credits Fish with having established his reputation in a specifically literary context, with the invention of 'reader response criticism,' "which emphasized the predominance of the audience's critical reaction to the text over the intention of the author, or a presumption of inherent meaning." As a part of his conclusions on what Fish stands for, D'Souza alleges that classroom evaluations or student papers can be measured against no fixed standard, and in consequence, grading becomes pointless. The reason is that it only reflects the preferences of the instructor, which necessarily are arbitrary and politically motivated, rather than what the student has produced. D'Souza goes on: "As for the reading list and classroom discussions, it is no longer necessary to struggle with *Paradise Lost* to try and figure out what the

poem means, or what Milton tried to convey. It is instead entirely respectable to read popular novels and watch movies in class. It is not difficult to see the appeal of this pedagogy to students."

He similarly concludes that "once the concept of 'academic standards' is shown to be a shibboleth, there is no reason not to cast it aside and adopt whatever alternative seems expedient."

These seem to be curious allegations, particularly about an English professor whose field of specialization is John Milton. Fish refutes these and many other of D'Souza's claims, and states that on the English major at Duke, the great books written by Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton and Pope are required reading: "The true picture of what goes on at Duke emerged in a statistical study made by the dean of the undergraduate college, who reported that 91.5 percent of the courses given in the department dealt with traditional Western materials and accounted for 95.8 percent of the student enrollment."

To obtain a true picture of the state of the canon in the United States, is, as has been demonstrated, an extremely complex task. As regards the future, of the discipline of literary studies, however, there appears to be some measure of consensus on the part of observers as far spart ideologically as Harold Bloom and Anthony Easthope. Predictably, while arriving at similar conclusions, their analysis is different, and they place a totally different value on these conclusions.

The title of Easthope's book, *Literary into Cultural Studies*, provides the clue as to where he believes the discipline to be going. As he states, at one time people supposed that literary study formed the core for a modern education in the humanities; "now it has turned out 'to be just a 'subject' like

any other". In 1972 both Hough and Raymond Williams made a proposal for a paper on literary theory to be included for the Cambridge English degree, which Easthope offers as evidence for his assertion. He believes there are a number of external reasons for the decline in the centrality of literary studies, and mentions "the postmodern demise of the Great Christian Narrative", together with a quadrupling during the 1960s of the number of students going on to higher education in Britain and North America, and "the way the counterculture of the 1960s mounted a fierce critique of all academic hegemonies, including literary study."

He considers the main cause, however, to be the extent to which music, film, television and advertising, in other words, popular culture, came to permeate everyday experience from 1960.¹¹⁷ Easthope's conclusions are simple enough:

If in such ways the opposition between high and popular culture on which literary study was founded in the 1930s had come under external attack, at the same time internally the paradigm suffered theoretical devastation at its core. The aim - the methodological and experiential practice - of disclosing unity via the modernist reading foundered when it was shown that the work was not by nature unified. If the method could no longer demonstrate unity, then the distinction between significantly unified canonical texts and non-unified - and therefore non-canonical texts - became eroded, and the field of literary study fell into profound question. If the text could no longer be treated as a complete, self-sufficient object, then the applied empiricism presuming the text was simply there outside any theory and practice for its construction had to go. 118

As a part of Easthope's ideas on the future of the discipline, the above is interesting, but when Bloom asserts that "after a lifetime spent in teaching literature at one of our major universities, I have very little confidence that literary education will survive its current malaise", one cannot fail to be shocked at the deep pessimism he is exposing.119 Bloom categorically states that he does not believe that literary studies as such have a future, but this fact does not entail the death of literary criticism. In his view, "students of literature have become amateur political scientists, uninformed sociologists, incompetent anthropologists, mediocre philosophers, and overdetermined cultural historians", because they "resent literature, or are ashamed of it, or are just not all that fond of reading it. "120 Nonetheless, he believes that criticism will survive as a branch of literature, but does not consider it likely to take place in teaching institutions. He also predicts that the study of Western literature will continue, although on a scale similar to current Classics departments. Bloom coincides with Easthope in that "what are now called 'Departments of English' will be renamed departments of 'Cuitural Studies'". 121 However, in the bitterness of his elaboration of the content of these departments, Bloom is worlds apart from Easthope, for he sees that "Batman comics, Mormon theme parks, television, movies, and rock will replace Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, Wordsworth, and Wallace Stevens."122

One of the main problems with the canon is that it is increasingly perceived to be out of touch with modern society. When that society becomes more and more complex, and when the minority groups in it press for their views and opinions to be heard, the politically correct reject the canon per se.

Marilyn Friedman's words sum up this situation, and point to the need for the examination of minority groups in America in our next section:

There are moral values and interests that it does not address in a substantial or sustained manner, however universal might be the range of interests that it does address. The Western canon in philosophy offers very little insight about how to negotiate the complicated ethnic pluralism that is a crucial and definitive feature of contemporary U.S. life. It also offers virtually no critical reflection on those traditional mainstays of human identity: femininity, masculinity, and the whole spectrum of gender-based social practices. The remedy for these omissions is to include multicultural studies in our curricula. 123

In conclusion, there appears to be a great deal of right on both sides of the debate, just as both sides very obviously often weaken their own arguments by resorting to invective and hostile abuse. A strident attitude such as this does not make a conciliatory position easy, for, as we have seen, when terms like "enemy" are employed to tar the other side, not unnaturally, neither is likely to be particularly well disposed to the arguments of the other. The debate, while ostensibly about whether or not a hierarchy of "good books" can, or ought to be established, goes far deeper than that. What is really at issue is the whole concept of education, civilization, tradition and culture.

The defenders of the literary canon regard it as a symbol for all they believe sacred and worthy of retention in western history and civilization. They believe that the politically correct movement in literary studies is out to subvert the ideals and traditions that have forged great art, especially literature.

They are also concerned that with the appearance of modern technology, the habit and enjoyment of reading will be lost. In fact, their position may be regarded as one of anger and dismay at the erosion of values and of a way of life that they consider to be a priceless contribution to the history of the world.

The politically correct vision denies the value of this tradition, proclaiming it to be the product of an elite minority, and thus worthy of censure and repudiation. There is an open rejection of the ideology behind the traditional view of education and of the purpose of literary studies. Indeed, as has been seen, the demise of literary studies has been forecast by both sides, and the advent of cultural studies is nigh. There is a challenge to the received vision of "national" literatures, and a perspective is sought which views texts as products of social and political contingencies, reflecting these contingencies. The uncovering of texts previously ignored has undoubtedly meant that we now have access to works which would not have been considered worthy of consideration were canonical rules to be applied, and which have, nevertheless, proved to be illuminating, and have widened horizons.

However, I do not believe, as is too frequently the case, that it is necessary to remain in one camp and therefore reject all the tenets of the other. Why, for example, should it not be possible to encourage students to compare their written texts with other art forms, while still revering the greatness of the literary version? Shakespeare has had so many renderings including, in modern times, film versions by directors from cultures as different as the Russian or the Japanese. Is it not enriching to all to examine what Shakespeare can mean to other cultures, instead of just seeking the "correct" interpretations of the

words? On the other hand, is it not impoverishing to study texts solely from one angle, be it that of social oppression, patriarchal repression, sexism, or whatever? Is it really so enlightening to discover that a certain author was a misogynist, and consequently to disparage his work because of this fact? Is it not possible to recognize this, (and perhaps to give thanks that things have changed somewhat), and yet to attempt to understand how life worked in another time so different from our own?

Furthermore, while many black people may be very glad to relate to their ancestry by reading texts by black people, do middle class American blacks necessarily relate to the tales of slavery any more than white ones do? This idea of being able to relate to texts because of their supposed connection with our lives, would seem to be deeply flawed, and not only for the reason just given. To have contact with, to experience the contrasts afforded by exposure to different cultures enhances one's appreciation of the infinite diversity of life, as my own experience has shown. Similarly, to be able to look at life through the literature of a bygone age is, or should be, enriching and enlightening. It is a possibility which should be open to all.

NOTES

- 1. Toni Morrison, "The Canon: Civil War and Reconstruction," Michigan Quarterly Review, vol. XXVIII, no. 1, Winter 1989, p. 8.
- 2. Katha Pollitt, "Why Do We Read?" in Paul Berman, Op. cit., p. 207: "Becoming a textbook is a book's only chance all sides take that for granted."
- 3. See Harry M. Bracken, Freedom of Speech: Words are not Needs, (Westport Co.: Praeger Publishers, 1994), p. 85: "all sides recognize that voracious readers are few and far between. No one who has taught at the university level in recent years is under any illusions about either the willingness or the ability of many students to read the bare minimum that may be required in a course. That is what adds urgency to the matter. It is believed to be of great importance that the "right" books get into the canon, lest they slip off into anonymity, and the students slide into political sin."
- 4. Harold Bloom, The Western Canon: The Books and School of the Ages, (London: Papermac, 1995), p. 519.
- 5. Op. cit., p. 518.

 See also John Searle, "The Storm over the University", in Paul Berman, Op. cit., p. 105: "[F]or reasons I do not fully understand, many professors of literature no longer care about literature in the ways that seemed satisfactory to earlier generations."
- 6. See Allan Bloom's opinion in *The Closing of the American Mind*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), p. 64: "the failure to read good books both enfeebles the vision and strengthens our most fatal tendency the belief that the here and now is all there is."

 John Annette, *Op. cit.*, p. 7, makes the following observation about Allan Bloom's best seller, which explains how it has influenced public opinion in America: "While most readers of Bloom would have bought the book because of its scathing attack on contemporary youth culture, it did help to establish the public's view that something called post-modernism or post-structuralism or, even more specifically, deconstruction theory undermined Western rationality and belief in liberalism."
- 7. John Alberti, (ed.) *The Canon in the Classroom*, (New York: Garland Publishing, 1995), p. xiii.
- 8. Anthony Easthope, *Literary into Cultural Studies*, (London: Routledge, 1991), p. 7.

- 9. Carey Kaplan and Ellen Cronan Rose, The Canon and the Common Reader, (Americal Tenn: University of Tennessee Press, 1990), p. 10.
- 10. John R. Searle, "Postmodernism and the Western Rationalist Tradition", in Arthur and Shapiro, Op. cit., p. 28-48
- 11. Op. cit., p. 38.
- 12. Ibid., p. 37-38.
- 13. See Searle, "The Storm over the University", Op. cit., p. 94: "Those who think that the traditional canon should be abandoned believe that Western civilization in general, and the United States in particular, are in large part oppressive, imperialist, patriarchal, hegemonic, and in need of replacement, or at least of transformation."
- 14. Stanley Fish, There's No Such Thing as Free Speech, Op. cit., p. 96.
- 15. See Morris Dickstein, Op. cit., p. 588: "The same conflict is played out every day in debates within academic departments, with younger scholars opting for a theory-based, radically decentred, highly politicised curriculum reflecting current fashions in ethnicity, postmodernism, and gender politics, and older teachers retiring early, feeling depressed and beleaguered."
- 16. Herbert Lindenberger, *The History in Literature: On Value, Genre, Institutions*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), p. 134.
- 17. Harold Bloom, Op. cit., p. 8-9.
- 18. Op. cit., p. 22.
- 19. Edward Said, "The Politics of Knowledge", in Paul Berman, Op. cit., p. 188.
- 20. Pollitt, Op. cit., p. 209-210.
- 21. Easthope, Op. cit., p. 8.
- 22. Ibid., p. 9.
- 23. Ibid., p. 9.
- 24. Pollit, Op. cit., p. 210.
- 25. Harold Bloom, Op. cit., p. 30.
- 26. Op. cit., p. 31.
- 27. Ibid., p. 4.

- 28. Ibid., p. 527.
- 29. Ibid., p. 23.
- 30. Thomas Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), Op. cit.
- 31. Easthope, Op. cit., p. 3.

 For an opinion which considers that Kuhn is invoked to support extravagant theories, see Robert Hughes Op. cit., p. 113: "Both Kuhn and Rorty are supposed, oddly enough, to be supported by the deconstructive works of Jacques Derrida, who is alleged to have shown that the very idea of truth can be deconstructed, that the opposition between truth and falsity, between fact and fiction, is an illusory one, and that it is a "logocentric" prejudice to suppose that there is an independent reality that exists beyond texts. In fact, according to the literary theorists influenced by Derrida, there is nothing beyond or outside texts. So O'Brien is supposed to have triumphed over Winston after all."
- 32. See also Bérubé, Op. cit., p. 123: "As Kuhn argued in The Structure of Scientific Revolutions (1962), revolutionary 'paradigm-shifts' occur when one dominant theory supersedes another, but the new paradigm doesn't simply 'falsify' or 'disprove' the older model. Instead, writes Kuhn, paradigm-shifts are matters in which 'neither proof nor error is at issue', because different scientific communities were simply seeing different 'facts' even when they were looking at what we now think are the same phenomena: 'theories, of course, do 'fit the facts', but only by transforming previously accessible information into facts that, for the preceding paradigm, had not existed at all."
- 33. Easthope, Op. cit., p. 3.
- 34. Op. cit., p. 10-11.
- 35. Alberti, Op. cit., p. xxv-xxvi.
- 36. Op. cit., p. xxvi.
- 37. Ibid., p. xiv.
- 38. Ibid., p. xiv.
- 39. *Ibid.*, p. xiv.
- 40. Ibid., p. iv.
- 41. Bérubé, Op. cit., p. 123.

42. Op. cit., p. 123: "It's not that there are no "facts" in pomo, or that anything goes so long as everybody's happy; rather, it's that pomo has paid acute attention to how various human communities go about deciding what will count as "facts"

See also John Alberti, Op. cit., p. xix., who, in writing of current trends in pedagogic practice considers the importance of the: "focus on how to teach as on what to teach as a part of a larger trend to deconstruct the traditional binary opposition between "theory" and "practice," a dynamic view of education as a dialogic process of cultural analysis rather than the static transmission of information, a commitment to involve students as participants in culture rather than consumers of it."

- 43. Said, Op. cit., p. 186.
- 44. Harold Bloom, Op. cit., p. 520: "English and related departments have always been unable to define themselves and unwise enough to swallow up everything that seems available for ingestion."

See also Searle, "The Storm over the University", Op. cit., p. 105-106: "Perhaps the original mistake was in supposing that there is a well-defined academic discipline of 'literary criticism' - as opposed to literary scholarship - capable of accommodating Ph.D. programs, research projects, and careers for the ambitious. When such a discipline fails to be 'scientific' or rigorous, or even well-defined, the field is left wide open for various fashions, such as deconstruction, or for the current political enthusiasms."

This idea was further developed by Searle in "Postmodernism and the Western Rationalist Tradition", Op. cit., p. 39: "[I]n some disciplines, primarily those humanities disciplines concerned with literary studies - English, French, and Comparative Literature especially - the existing academic norms were fragile, and the way was opened intellectually for a new academic agenda."

- 45. Roger Kimball, Op. cit., p. xii.
- 46. Said, Op. cit., p. 188.
- 47. Searle, "The Storm over the University", Op. cit., p. 87.
- 48. Michael Bérubé, Op. cit., p. 123.
- 49. Kimball, Op. cit., p. 165.
- 50. Op. cit., p. 165.
- 51. Searle, "Postmodernism and the Western Rationalist Tradition", Op. cit., p. 40.

- 52. Ibid., p. 40.
- 53. Searle, "The Storm over the University", Op. cit., p. 100.
- 54. Harold Bloom, Op. cit., p. 32-33: "Those who resent all canons suffer from an elitist guilt founded upon the accurate enough realization that canons always do indirectly serve the social and political, and indeed the spiritual, concerns and aims of the wealthier classes of each generation of Western society. It seems clear that capital is necessary for the cultivation of aesthetic values."
- 55. Kimball, Op. cit., p. 6: "Even more troubling because more likely to be taken seriously is the suggestion that 'the establishment of a canon in humanistic studies' is 'fundamentally undemocratic'. This idea is as pernicious as it is common, implying as it does that political democracy is essentially inimical to authority, tradition, and rigor in its cultural institutions. At bottom, it is another way of suggesting that being democratic means abandoning any claim to permanent intellectual or cultural achievement."
- 56. Alberti, Op. cit., p. xxiii:
- 57. Easthope, Op. cit., p. 6-7.
- 58. Ibid., p. 7.
- 59. Harold Bloom, Op. cit., p. 522.

 For Bloom's outspoken and controversial opinion about the contribution to literature by the working-class, see also p. 38: "Very few working-class readers ever matter in determining the survival of texts, and left-wing critics cannot do the working-class's reading for it."
- 60. Ibid., p. 522.
- 61. Ibid., p. 26.
- 62. Ibid., p. 7.
- 63. Hughes, Op. cit., p. 114-115.
- 64. Harold Bloom, Op. cit., p. 528.
- 65. Ibid., p. 40.
- 66. Nina King, "What Happened at Duke", in Patricia Aufderheide, Op. cit., p. 120.
- 67. Ibid., p. 120.
- 68. Ibid., p. 120.

- 69. Harold Bloom, Op. cit., p. 526.
- 70. Todd Gitlin, "On the Virtues of a Loose Canon", in Patricia Aufderheide, Op. cit., p. 187.
- 71. Searle, "The Storm over the University", Op. cit., p. 96.
- 72. Op. cit., p. 100.
- 73. Ibid., p. 100.
- 74. See Harold Bloom, Op. cit.: "I hope that the book does not turn out to be an elegy for the Western Canon, and that perhaps at some point there will be a reversal, and the rabblement of lemmings will cease to hurl themselves off the cliff." p. 4., or

"'Idealism,' concerning which one struggles not to be ironic, is now the fashion in our schools and colleges, where all aesthetic and most intellectual standards are being abandoned in the name of social harmony and the remedying of historical injustice. Pragmatically, the 'expansion of the Canon' has meant the destruction of the Canon, since what is being taught includes by no means the best writers who happen to be women, African, Hispanic, or Asian, but rather the writers who offer little but the resentment they have developed as part of their sense of identity." p. 8., or, again,

"The socially acceptable ode of the future will doubtless spare us such pretensions and instead address itself to the proper humility of shared sisterhood, the new subliminity of quilt making that is now the preferred trope of Feminist criticism." p. 31., or yet again,

"The death of the author, proclaimed by Foucault, Barthes, and many clones after them, is another anticanonical myth, similar to the battle cry of resentment that would dismiss 'all of the dead, white European males' -that is to say, for a baker's dozen, Homer, Virgil, Dante, Chaucer, Shakespeare, Cervantes, Montaigne, Milton, Goethe, Tolstoy, Ibsen, Kafka, and Proust." p. 39. Similarly, "But Burckhardt and Curtius lived and died before the Age of Warhol, when so many are famous for fifteen minutes each. Immortality for a quarter of an hour is now freely conferred and can be regarded as one of the more hilarious consequences of "opening up the Canon." p. 39-40. (my emphases)

75. Harold Bloom, *Op. cit.*, p. 17: "Pragmatically, aesthetic value can be recognized or experienced, but it cannot be conveyed to those who are incapable of grasping its sensations and perceptions. To quarrel on its behalf is always a blunder.

What interests me more is the flight from the aesthetic among

- so many in my profession, some of whom at least began with the ability to experience aesthetic value. In Freud, flight is the metaphor for repression, for unconscious yet purposeful forgetting. The purpose is clear enough in my profession's flight: to assuage displaced guilt."
- 76. See *lbid.*, p. 17: "We need to teach more selectively, searching for the few who have the capacity to become highly individual readers and writers. The others, who are amenable to a politicized curriculum, can be abandoned to it. Pragmatically, aesthetic value can be recognized or experienced, but it cannot be conveyed to those who are incapable of grasping its sensations and perceptions. To quarrel on its behalf is always a blunder."

See also p. 520: "The strongest poetry is cognitively and imaginatively too difficult to be read deeply by more than a relative few of any social class, gender, race, or ethnic origin."

- 77. Op. cit., p. 22: "The Western Canon, despite the limitless idealism of those who would open it up, exists precisely in order to impose limits, to set a standard of measurement that is anything but political or moral.
- 78. Ibid., p. 16.
- 79. See, for example, two quotations from *The Importance of Being Earnest*: "Really, if the lower orders don't set us a good example, what on earth is the use of them?" and, "In matters of grave importance, style, not sincerity, is the vital thing."

Also, from the preface to *The Portrait of Dorian Gray*: "There is no such thing as a moral or an immoral book. Books are well written, or badly written." And from the book itself: "It is only shallow people who do not judge by appearances."

Perhaps the most outrageous idea, from the point of view of political correctness, comes from *The Soul of Man Under Socialism:* "As for the virtuous poor, one can pity them, of course, but one cannot possibly admire them."

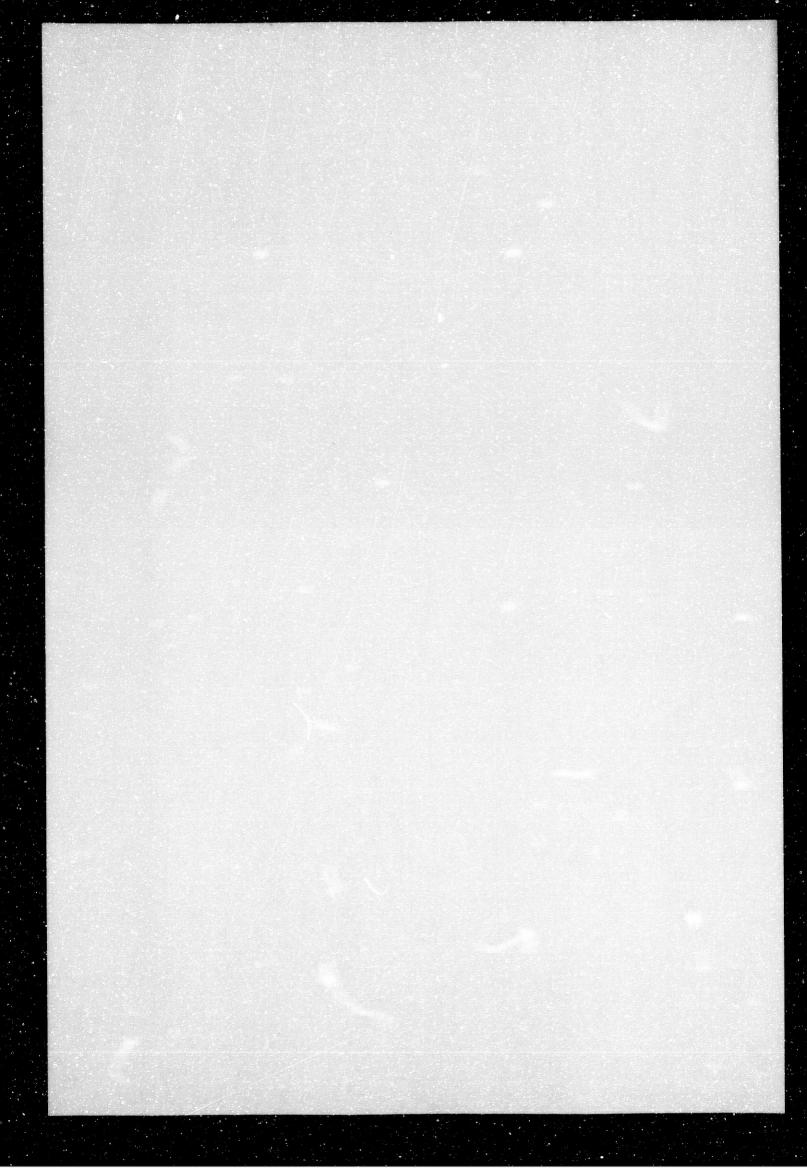
- 80. For a view which opposes this one, see Searle, "The Storm over the University", Op. cit., p. 122: "It is important [...] to get rid of the ridiculous notion that there is something embarrassing or lamentable about the fact that most of the prominent intellectual leaders of our culture over the past two thousand years or so have been white males. This is just a historical fact whose causes should be explored and understood. To deny it or attempt to suppress the works of such thinkers is not simply racism, it is unintelligent."
- 81. Henry Louis Gates, Jr., "Whose Canon Is It, Anyway?", in Paul Berman, Op. cit., p. 192-193.

- 82. See Easthope, Op. cit., p. 6-7: "cultural studies must be prepared to consider every form of signifying practice as a valid object for study if it is to count as a serious discourse of knowledge. And cultural studies must act on the democratic principle assumed by Williams that the discourses of all members of a society should be its concern, not just those of an educated elite."
- 83. See Paula Bennett, "Canons to the Right of Them...", in Aufderheide, Op. cit., p. 166: "In opening up the canon to a multiplicity of voices from America's racially and ethnically excluded minorities, the anthology has challenged American identity at its core in the dream of Adamic innocence that has historically sustained and justified it. Those who are vulnerable will see this challenge as an attack upon themselves their values, their way of life and they will fight it with everything in them. The virulence they bring to the canon's defense may prove, finally, the measure of the anthology's "success" in transforming our image of America's past, and present. But it also suggests that nothing is safe about the Heath [Anthology of American Literature], least of all teaching it in the charged political climate that now prevails both in the university and in the culture at large."
- 84. Marilyn Friedman, "Codes, Canons, Correctness, and Feminism" in Marilyn Friedman and Jan Narveson, *Political Correctness: For and Against*, (Lanham, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 1995), p. 13.
- 85. See Kimball, Op. cit., p. 15: "[T]he single biggest challenge to the canon as traditionally conceived [is] radical feminism. As with the cult of theory, with which it is often in collusion, radical feminism does not undermine the canon only or even primarily by proposing an alternative canon one for example in which female authors are read in place of male ones. Instead, it seeks to subordinate literature to ideology by instituting a fundamental change in the way literary works are read and taught."
- 86. See Bloom's sarcastic dismissal of this view, Op. cit., p. 7-8: "[...] feminist cheerleaders proclaim that women writers lovingly cooperate with one another as quilt makers, while African-American and Chicano literary activists go even further in asserting their freedom from any anguish of contamination whatsoever: each of them is Adam early in the morning. They know no time when they were not as they are now; self-created, self-begot, their puissance is their own. As assertions by poets, playwrights, and prose-fiction writers, these are healthy and understandable, however self-deluded. But as declarations by supposed literary critics, such optimistic pronouncements are neither true nor interesting, and go against both human nature and the nature of imaginative literature."

- 87. Jane Tompkins, (ed.) Reader Response Criticism: From Formalism to Poststructuralism, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), p. xxv.
- 88. See Bracken, Op. cit., p 83: "[Bleing unwilling or unable to muster cogent defense arguments, traditionalists have responded to the threats of the new censors by resorting to their traditional methods. They counter the new rhetoric with the old, they try to block appointments and promotions, and they appeal to outside forces to come to the defense of the American values that they claim find expression in the old curriculum."
- 89. Ibid., p. 83.
- 90. Ibid., p. 83.
- 91. Ibid., p. 83.
- 92. Ibid., p. 83.
- 93. See Gitlin, Op. cit., p. 186: "The tight canonists don't take account, either, of the fact that the canon has always been in flux, constantly shifting under our feet."

 For an analysis of literary criticism from 1920-1970 see an opinion which supports this view in Gregory S. Jay, Op. cit., p. 154; also Dickstein, Op. cit., p. 546.
- 94. Jung Min Choi and John W. Murphy, *The Politics and Philosophy of Political Correctness*, (Westport Co: Praeger Publishers, 1993), p. 31.
- 95. Lindenberger, Op. cit., p. 141.
- 96. See Harold Bloom, Op. cit., p. 31, and note 75 above.
- 97. Barry W. Sarchett, "What's All the Fuss About This Postmodernist Stuff?", in Arthur and Shapiro, Op. cit., p. 24.
- 98. Ibid., p. 23.
- 99. Alberti, Op. cit., p. xv.
- 100. Ibid., p. xv.
- 101. Ibid., p. xxvi.
- 102. D'Souza, Op. cit., p. 189.
- 103. Ibid., p. 157.
- 104. Ibid., p 157.

- 105. Ibid., p. 157.
- 106. Ibid., p. 157-158.
- 107. Ibid., p. 158.
- 108. Ibid., p. 172.
- 109. Ibid., p. 172.
- 110. Ibid., p. 172: "Gates identified what he called 'a rainbow coalition of blacks, leftists, feminists, deconstructionists, and Marxists' who had now infiltrated academia and were 'ready to take control.' It would not be much longer, he predicted. 'As the old guard retires, we will be in charge. Then, of course, the universities will become more liberal politically'."
- 111. Ibid., p. 174.
- 112. Ibid., p. 180.
- 113. Ibid. p. 184.
- 114. Fish, There's No Such Thing as Free Speech, Op. cit., p. 95.
- 115. Easthope, Op. cit., p. 19.
- 116. Op. cit., p. 19.
- 117. Ibid., p. 19.
- 118. Ibid., p. 19.
- 119. Harold Bloom, Op. cit., p. 517.
- 120. Op. cit., p. 521.
- 121. Ibid., p. 519.
- 122. Ibid., p. 519.
- 123. Friedman, Op. cit., p. 12.



c) Minority Groups - Victim Culture and Multiculturalism

In the previous section it was seen how Friedman urged the adoption of multicultural studies in curricula to offset the deficiencies of the Western canon and thus to enable students to better comprehend the plural society that is now North America. Friedman makes a distinction between what she terms the "shallow global diversity" approach and "deep" multiculturalism. According to her analysis, the former "seizes hold of the concept of diversity per se and concedes that it is important for U.S. education to provide its students with some instruction about societies outside the United States and Europe." In the author's opinion, this is a halfway measure which cannot be considered a substantial concession, but the bare minimum, since anything less should be regarded as a "national disgrace". By this analysis she evidently considers that either one subscribes fully to a multicultural approach or one is in effect merely paying lipservice to the concept. Friedman believes that the shallow global diversity approach fails to meet the requirements for deep multiculturalism on two counts, because it does not pay due attention to "marginalized groups within Western societies" and moreover, it adheres to the "questionable assumption" that the best and most revealing works about a culture are those that achieve "classic" status.² Friedman gives as examples of these marginalized groups, women and non-whites.

Together with gay activists, feminists and black activists have proved to be the most energetic defenders of political correctness. Stanley Fish declares true respect for feminism and the "influence it has exerted on the intellectual life of society", because he believes that "the questions raised by feminism 'have energized more thought and social action than any other 'ism' in the past twenty or thirty years'." As there is no universal consensus of what feminism is and what it purports to bring about, it is necessary to examine some recent definitions. This is no place for an exhaustive study of the history of feminism, and so this brief study will limit itself to writing in connection with political correctness issues, beginning with Friedman's own appraisal: "Feminist theory seeks an understanding of social and cultural life that can illuminate the ways to diminish the exploitation, abuse, and oppression of women and to promote various forms of female flourishing."

Cameron considers that feminism must address not only the social order, but also economic and moral considerations. "Gender differences service a whole social, economic and moral order. Feminism is not about celebrating the skills required of women by our present arrangements, but about changing those arrangements root and branch. Feminism must question sexual divisions of labour in every sphere of life."

As with all social movements, there are those who adopt a strong or even hardline attitude, and others, who while subscribing to a theory, are more

conciliatory. It is the extreme manifestations of feminism which, not unnaturally, have been the object of most condemnation and ridicule. In a caustic phrase, Hughes dismisses a much criticised element of feminist practice, and one that is particularly important for a study of the linguistic implications of PC, as "the lumpen-feminist assault on all words that have "man" as a prefix or suffix."

Margaret Doyle sets out the reason for avoiding sexist language in the introduction to her handbook entitled The A-Z of Non-Sexist Language: it can be used "to discriminate against women not only by reinforcing harmful stereotypes but also by rendering women's presence and achievements invisible."7 Doyle concedes that there are many who think that sexism will not be eradicated simply by eliminating sexist usage. These are people who understand that the way to reform lies through attacking the concrete manifestations of sexism in society, which include discrimination, violence against women, harassment, and economic inequality. They furthermore believe that the adoption of non-sexist language may even be harmful as it covers up the "systemic sexism" in society by providing a "superficially progressive veneer."8 Conversely, others hold that "an essential part of tackling societal sexism" resides in the use of non-sexist language, since "language influences our attitudes and behaviour; watching our language goes hand in hand with being careful how we treat others."9 It is this view that is of obvious interest for the present study.

In relation to Hughes's "lumpen-feminist assault", Doyle devotes three pages out of the hundred and one that comprise the dictionary section, to an

explanation of "Man and mankind and '-man' words". Man and mankind, she informs us, are sometimes called 'pseudogenerics', which, although they are used as generic terms intended to include both men and women, "are inherently masculine and are understood to be masculine." Man when used in this way is ambiguous, and consequently the generic use of man and mankind is "ineffective, offensive, and unnecessary." Doyle proffers "many alternative terms" whose use will express what is meant much more clearly. These are: "humans, humankind, human race, human species, humanity, human nature, people, persons, folk, public, citizens, citizenry, population, society, civilization, community, world, everyone, anyone, you and me, we, us, earthlings, mortals, warm-blooded creatures, flesh and blood, participants, workers, voters, inhabitants, residents." Illustrating her argument with what some may consider a revealing example, the author explains that avoidance of the generic use of man enables us to recover the original meaning of 'male', "useful when a sign saying 'Men's toilet' means just that."

Doyle believes that compound words using -man are a good example of sexist language which does not conform with the way we live now. She refers to job titles and descriptions such as "craftsman" and "foreman", that were once occupations held exclusively by men, but because they may now well be held by women, the gender-based title is ambiguous. She points to the longtime existence of words ending in -woman, "charwoman", washerwoman", etc. to indicate that it is false to assume that words ending in -man include women. "Otherwise, there would have been no need for these words - "charman", "washerman" and "gentleman" would have been used as the

'generic' terms, which they clearly are not."13

One of the main problems with false generics is that people, and she emphasizes that young people in particular, interpret words with -man as being masculine. Doyle suggests three ways of circumventing the -man difficulty. One uses -woman compounds in sex-specific ways, of which some have already been long established. "Spokeswoman" and "saleswoman" are specifically cited. The author urges caution when combining -man words with -woman words, so that they may be used in a balanced way. "Do not, for example, use 'craftsmen and women'." Another option is the replacement of -man by -person, as in "spokesperson". Unfortunately, "[a]lthough this is an acceptable, clear, and easy alternative, it has been the butt of many jokes about political correctness and so has not enjoyed much success." Alternative genderneutral terms that can be applied to men and women is another option, "artisan" for "craftsman", for example. Many -man suffixes replaced by -er may perform this function, as in "fisher".

In a guide for bias-free writing, Marilyn Schwartz affirms that "non-sexist" is used as a term for "language that avoids gender stereotyping." The guide was drawn up in collaboration with a task force on bias-free language of the Association of American University Presses to promote this kind of use in university publications. It does emphasize the danger of automatically assuming that all apparently sexist usage is necessarily so. An example is provided of a text where the use of "the marked women teachers, the courtesy title Mrs., and the strongly connotative lady," should not be considered sexist because they "make a specific point about the influence of

certain women (as opposed to men) teachers on the author's life and [..] characterize the manners of pre-1919 gender debate in the United States."

Another example of the opposite phenomenon is offered, where apparently nonsexist language in a passage on warfare is "possibly cloaking an underlying androcentrism in gender-neutral language."

The guide's considerations about compounds with man are interesting as they provide a recent account, (the guide was published in 1995), of the state of the art on this subject in the United States:

Compound forms employing man -for example, manpower, manmade, craftsman, chairman, congressman, and fireman- are likewise imprecise or ambiguous when they refer to both sexes or to a person of unspecified sex. Usage guidelines recommend gender-neutral alternatives, and many state and federal agencies in the United States have officially adopted unmarked terms - personnel or human resources, manufactured or artificial, artisan, chair, or chairperson, member of Congress or representative, and fire fighter- especially for occupational titles. 19

Cameron explores the reaction to feminist demands for non-sexist language illustrating an incident which occurred in 1971 at the Harvard linguistics faculty. The faculty took it upon itself to send a letter to the college newspaper assuring feminists that masculine generics were no more than a neutral fact of English grammar. Thirteen years later, in 1984, the Linguistics Association of Great Britain sponsored a panel on language and gender. Here, in an attempt to amend the constitution of the association, proposals were made

for the removal of generic masculine pronouns and for the office of chairman to be renamed. Opposition from the floor was based on the grounds that "'whatever the merits of the [feminist] case', an organization of professional linguists would lose all credibility if it were seen to endorse prescription [...]. "20 Cameron's interpretation of this incident is that "unlike the Harvard faculty, the LAGB remained agnostic on the 'merits of the case', but nevertheless expressed unwillingness to promote any change through prescriptive intervention." She believes that these two incidents are examples of a generalized attitude that regards these demands as "yet another deplorable example of misguided prescriptive interference." "22

Feminism, as has been seen, is concerned with many more issues than the eradication of sexist language. In a recently published book by John Fekete entitled *Moral Panic: Biopolitics Rising*, one of the author's theses is that what he terms "biofeminism" has hijacked the discourse of women's liberation, "diminishing and redirecting the concept of liberation to aim at 'equity,' and deforming and abusing the goals and practices of equity to assault all the libertarian principles that could provide meaning and moral value to it." He devotes particular attention to feminist topics, believing as he does that it is the most prominent form of biopolitics in present North American society. Fekete is an academic at a Canadian university, and although most of his examples are drawn from Canada, given the profound influence wielded in many spheres of Canadian life by its neighbour to the south, his book is relevant to this discussion.

For Fekete, biofeminism comprises mutations of the initial feminism of

the late 1960s and early 1970s, which at that time, together with the new left and various youth counter-culture movements, was working towards a new enlightenment. However, biofeminism, he believes, is based upon hostility and anxiety, and is concerned with both the "discourse of aggression toward its adversary, the fiction of a biologically defined group, 'men,' and the discourse of fear in the face of threats to its safety and security, the panic fiction of 'violence against women'."24 Fekete cites as an example to illustrate his point, what he terms "the corruption of boundaries and distinctions in the universe of Catherine MacKinnon."25 MacKinnon is a well-known feminist professor of law at Harvard, and in Arthur and Shapiro's collection of essays on the campus wars, her contribution is entitled "Sexuality". It is no doubt in reference to articles like this that Fekete concludes that when she "collapses the two categories of intercourse (normal) and rape (pathological), the male lover and the rapist are revealed as one and the same. Sex and violence are rendered identical."26 Fekete maintains that logic of this nature prompts panic and subsequently aggression: "biopolitics and moral panic dovetail, then, as natural allies, aggressive and virulent."27

Fekete considers that biofeminism accepts blindly all the stories and fallacies that maintain its essential group interests and is prepared to regard everything that backs up its tenets as objective truth, "from patriarchy theory to lesbian utopia." Consequently it is fundamentalist in this respect, because is ideology is based upon the tenet that the deepest levels of identity are determined by a biologically defined grouping. In other words, the most revealing insights on the world are provided by dividing the world up according

to sex. Fekete equates "this fundamentalism about *identity*" with the other fundamentalisms of the twentieth century "that insist on dividing up people on the basis of race, or class, or some scriptural revelation."²⁹ Barring the last category, we have here, of course, the principal exponents of PC.

Before specifically examining the question of victim culture, attention should be paid to the issue of date rape, which, as Linda Grant records, has assumed great importance in the 1990s. She asserts that it is a phenomenon which has always been significant, and attributes the fact that it has suddenly been accorded great attention, to a new aspect which has been engendered on both sides of the debate. This aspect, which forms the centre of Fekete's book, as has been seen, is panic. Grant believes that present-day feminism is fixated on rape, pornography and incest, while the great issues of the 1960s and 1970s, "-equal pay, workplace nursery provision, proper rights for part-time employees-" are, for the most part, unsolved. Indeed, these economic issues have come to seem "unutterably boring to the minds of most feminists."

The author attributes the number of cases involving celebrities, (Mike Tyson and William Kennedy Smith, for example), that have reached the courts and achieved notoriety, as one factor of this fixation. Although rape is one of the most under-reported crimes, recent changes in the law have emboldened more women to move for prosecution for rape. Another reason she cites is the lack of scope, apart from sexual politics, for left-wing activists, after the rise and flowering of right-wing administrations during the 1980s. As she points out, politics abhors a vacuum, and though the politically aware understand that

poverty and injustice still continue to exist, because they have no power to change these conditions, their energies are concentrated upon areas in which political gains continue to be made. In consequence, we should not be surprised "if a new generation of committed students sees in rape, a sexual power struggle which is fought over every day, in their own lives." 32

Before feminism, student politics had performed the role of a kind of testing ground where the issues of the real world beyond the campuses were acted out. Feminism began to examine the relations between men and women within the universities, and by the 1980s, student politics acquired power on a scale previously unknown. "Campuses became test sites for every theory about relations between the sexes, between the races and between the sexualities. It is little wonder that student politics has reached out and been recognised well beyond the bounds of campuses themselves. Student politics have proved to be far from impotent." 33

Grant highlights a basic flaw in the date rape argument which she believes to have been clouded over in the rhetoric against rape crisis feminism: "that all rapes are equal, all equally traumatic." Both Grant and Fekete evoke the issue of the rape of women in Bosnia, Fekete arguing that feminist reporting was "self-dramatizing, fixated in gender-thinking, and bristling with hostility." Grant explains how elderly women who were raped did not represent these rapes as the worst trauma of their lives, but referred to the loss of their homes, their husbands, being bombed and separated from their families. This was recounted to feminist rape counsellors who went to Bosnia to provide a service that psychiatrists in Bosnia and Croatia admitted they had

never done, and the reactions of the elderly rape victims caused these counsellors no small surprise.³⁶ Grant believes that one factor contributing to this reaction or lack of reaction is that unlike young women who are often accused of having "asked for it" by wearing sexy clothes, society in general feels such disgust at the idea of sex with the elderly, that the rapist is somehow assumed to be "abnormal". So elderly rape victims at least do not have to go through a phase of tormenting themselves worrying if in some measure the rape was their own fault.³⁷

Grant does not go so far as to argue for a "hierarchy" of rape, but believes that there are very real differences in the way women experience rape, and that if a woman appears to be less traumatised, it does not necessarily mean that she is suffering from "false consciousness". The lack of trauma in no way makes the rape less wrong, but to understand the role of rape within the context of other traumas does "shed light on why sexual assault has become such a significant political movement on campuses." In contrast to elderly rape victims, be they Bosnians or not, Grant points out that for the students who are so active in their militancy on the subject of date rape, many of whom come from secure middle-class families, "rape absolutely is the worst thing that has ever happened to them." Implicit in this reflection is the same criticism that has been and is so often levelled against the feminist movement: namely that its most prominent members are middle-class with middle-class problems.

Throughout the forgoing discussion of the different dimensions of political correctness there has been frequent reference to the decade of the 1960s. The 1960s form a kind of watershed whose significance is symbolized

in different ways. It may mark the end of an era, one of self-confidence; it may mark a new era, with the advent of Democrat administrations; it may be the decade which saw the beginning of the Vietnam war, or may have many other connotations. With regard to the PC debate, for some, the impulsors of the political correctness movement are latter-day 1960s campus activists, who were then students and now hold varying degrees of power at the universities. PC, by this analysis, is an inheritance of radical 1960s' ideas. Another interpretation is strikingly different and is epitomised in the date rape controversy. Camille Paglia is a feminist whose views are provocative even within the ranks of feminism. She expresses her views on women's reactions to date rape and to sex, and they are in marked contrast to the biofeminist tenets discussed by Fekete. Bérubé has dubbed her "the pleasure-and-danger school", and her attitude provides evidence to aid the rebuttal of the charge that "PC ideologues all goose-step to the same drummer." As part of an interview on date rape and sex, Paglia has the following to say:

Rape is one of the risk factors in getting involved with men. It's a risk factor. It's like driving a car. My attitude is, it's like gambling. If you go to Atlantic City - these girls are going to Atlantic City, and when they lose, it's like 'Oh, Mommy and Daddy, I lost.' My answer is stay at home and do your nails, if that's the kind of person you are. My Sixties attitude is, yes, go for it, take the risk, take the challenge - if you get raped, if you get beat up in a dark alley in the street, it's okay. That was part of the risk of freedom, that's part of what we've demanded as women. Go with it. Pick yourself up, dust yourself off, and go on.⁴¹

The significance of Paglia's attitude is the rejection of what has come to be known as "victim culture" which permeates all aspects of PC. Under the heading of victims can come many groups, and any minority groups, precisely because they are a minority, may qualify for victim status. Edward Said writes of "the sanctimonious piety of historical or cultural victimhood," urging that it should not be used as an excuse to make the intellectual presence of the victims felt. Mark Mirsky refers to "political correctness and its fungus 'victimology'," which he believes "heralds a twentieth-century world in which not health but disease, past and naturally present, is what nations aspire to."

Dunant claims that PC has caused "a Richter scale tremor" within the liberal conscience. Because of its emphasis on the rights and demands of minorities, "it is often cited as one of the guilty parties in the growth of what has become known as victim culture. The great fear about victim culture is the effect it will have: that the cacophony of voices demanding attention will, far from achieving a richer cultural mix, only succeed in breaking apart any notion of a cultural whole."

Dunant indicates that the fear of cultural fragmentation is cited again and again by opponents of political correctness, and is the central thesis of Robert Hughes' Culture of Complaint. Hughes considers that it is "our new-found sensitivity" that "decrees that only the victim shall be here." The latest victim is the white American male, who, as Hughes puts it, "starts bawling for victim status too."

D'Souza also alludes to this situation and mentions programmes that are being set up in Mens's Studies, modelled along the lines of their Women's Studies counterparts."

Hughes believes that the rise of cult therapies teaching that we are all

the victims of our parents, is an offshoot of this victim mentality. This is a mentality which holds that:

whatever our folly, venality, or outright thuggishness, we are not to be blamed for it, since we come from 'dysfunctional families' - and, as John Bradshaw, Melody Beattie and other gurus of the twelve-step program are quick to point out on no evidence whatsoever, 96 percent of American families are dysfunctional. We have been given imperfect role models, or starved of affection, or beaten, or perhaps subjected to the goatish lusts of Papa; and if we don't think we have, it is only because we have repressed the memory and are therefore in even more urgent need of the quack's latest book.⁴⁷

This is just one of the multiple ways in which "an infantilized culture of complaint" has been created "in which Big Daddy is always to blame and the expansion of rights goes on without the other half of citizenship -attachment to duties and obligations." Hughes defines the idea of the infantile as "a regressive way to defy the stress of corporate culture: Don't tread on me, I'm vulnerable. The emphasis is on the subjective: how we feel about things, rather than what we think or can know." An emphasis such as this, as seen in the previous section, in the literature department, values the student's reaction to a text rather than his or her knowledge of or about it. Furthermore, the very idea of a victim is of someone who is incapable of reaction, of getting out of a difficult situation, and this was emphatically described above, by Paglia. Victims are unable to get up, dust themselves off and get on.

It is in order to aid the victim that affirmative action policies are

adopted. One form of affirmative action is to establish a system of quotas so that the proportion of the minority group, in domains where it was previously underrepresented, may now be more in keeping with its proportion in society overall. One explanation for affirmative action policies sees them as a form of "reparation" for past misdeeds, be they of commission or of omission. Bracken subscribes to this explanation, but questions whether "by according benefits in terms of one's membership in a particular group we can somehow create a society in which each citizen, regardless of group membership, is equitably treated before the law."

Jan Narveson believes that the epithet "politically correct" is quite appropriate as a description of the objectives of affirmative action. There is "no nonarbitrary basis" for choosing femaleness or blackness as opposed to hundreds of other criteria according to which people are without doubt "disproportionately represented in any number of employments, and then requiring employment to match those variables and not the others. The short, the left-handed, the Polish, the ones with an odd twitch [..] the list is endless." Narveson states that it is because sex and colour are readily noticed, that it is subsequently easy to assemble them to form pressure groups. "The claim, however, that justice uniquely singles out these groups for collective rectification is without rational basis. To advance the cause of affirmative action under the banner of general equal opportunity, therefore, is to defend the implausible by the unintelligible." "51

Gitlin writes of "interest-group pluralism" which creates a "fetish of the virtues of the minority." He sees a two-fold danger, for this attitude is both

"intellectually stultifying" and "politically suicidal."52 From this perspective one is encouraged to highlight aspects which emphasize difference and to play down those which underline commonality. "One's identification with an interest group comes to be the first and final word that opens and terminates one's intellectual curiosity. As soon as I declare I am a Jew, a black, a Hispanic, a woman, a gay, I have no more need to define my point of view."53 To proceed in this way also leads to inverse discrimination, since because a minority group is one which is or has been the victim of some form of injustice, every effort must be made not to compound the injustice by further wrongs. In consequence, Melanie Phillips believes that the "victim" class has ironically turned into a double victim, for they are "trapped between real prejudice and bigotry on one side and patronising and false assumptions on the other."54 It becomes very difficult to attribute any flaws or weaknesses to the victim, and a non-judgemental posture becomes crucial. Phillips considers that originally political correctness was supposed to help the oppressed, but that it has itself become an instrument of oppression. "The anxiety not to be thought judgemental has turned into a denial of any judgement at all, for fear of causing offence or denying people their rights."55

Hughes offers a particularly telling instance of this politically correct stance. Upon the publication of *Satanic Verses*, the Iranian mullahs declared a *fatwa* against its author, Salman Rushdie, for "blasphemy" against Islam. A price was fixed on his head, but virtually no reaction at all issued from academic circles. Hughes attributes two reasons for this almost total lack of protest on the part of American academics. The first one is the fear that

Islamic terrorists might turn their own American campuses into their next target. The second reason pertains to the more politically correct elements of the academics who "felt it was wrong to criticize a Muslim country, no matter what it did." 56

At home in America, such folk knew it was the height of sexist impropriety to refer to a young female as a 'girl' instead of a 'woman.' Abroad in Teheran, however, it was more or less OK for a cabal of regressive theocratic bigots to insist on the chador, to cut off thieves' hands and put out the eyes of offenders on TV, and to murder novelists as State policy. Oppression is what we do in the West. What they do in the Middle East is their 'culture.' Though of course we don't go along with everything the mobs -correction, the masses- of Iran say or do, we have to recognize that this culture is indeed theirs, not ours, and that the objective circumstances of anti-Arab racism in these Eurocentric United States would make a protest from the lit department seem like a caving-in to the values of the Republicans, who have used the often regrettable excesses of Islamic fundamentalism, which must be seen within a global context of Western aggression against Third World people.57

Hughes puts his finger on a fundamental hypocrisy, the existence and perpetuation of a double standard. His use of language may seem almost to be a parody and it reminds us of the language of certain left-wing publications. This is surely not unintended, for Hughes, and as has been seen, countless other observers, believes PC to be a manifestation of the ideas of an otherwise politically inactive Left.⁵⁸

The Salman Rushdie incident is an appropriate starting point for a

discussion of the role of multiculturalism within the concerns of PC. A study of inter-ethnic communication, Language and Reality: A Study of Communication in Multi-ethnic Workplaces, defines culture as "shared systems of meaning, derived from the experiences which people live through, which in turn influence the schemata which people bring to interactions and the interpretive frames they use in them." As the authors state, by this definition of culture, social, political and economic realities are seen as part of people's culture. Among its conclusions the study establishes that cultural difference has a role in discrimination. This, in all likelihood, is not a revolutionary disclosure, but David Palumbo-Liu is wary of the way diversity has recently become a keyword in political, economic, social, pedagogical, and cultural discourses, and believes it has become necessary in order to understand the current "multicultural phenomenon" to "address the question, why now?"

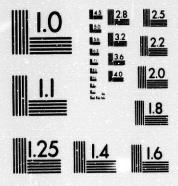
The author's interpretation of the answer to this question includes his belief that:

the call for 'diversity' was implicated within the program for creating a positive climate for workers. The gains made in these areas -affirmative action, Head Start programs, and so on- can be put to work in a number of ways. On the one hand, 'diversity' can lead to a better understanding of historical processes affecting diverse populations; on the other hand, it can be used to elide precisely those questions, as every 'participant' is promised a share in the profit of his or her labor, but without an account of its proportion, actual cost, or long-term effects. One of the tasks for a critical multiculturalism is to use the positive gains in educational systems (however produced) to the

advantage of the former and to forestall the latter.61

The author regards "pluralism" ("as well-intentioned as it may appear") as a point of departure for a critical multiculturalism.62 Nevertheless, as he points out, critical multiculturalism has its detractors on both the right and the left. Critics from the right see in multiculturalism a radical attempt to destroy the foundations of Western civilization. Palumbo-Liu considers a truer interpretation of their alarm to be "a sense that things in general are slipping badly to the side of diversity." That is to say, "more and more marginalized peoples (gays and lesbians, people of color, members of the working class, and women) are demanding a greater role in the ostensibly democratic institutions of the United States."63 Predictably, the criticism from the left accuses multiculturalism of "being merely a panacea, or worse, a strategy for the containment" of such demands. He considers that "it remains the task of critical multiculturalism to be alert both to the ways that multicultural criticism can fall in line with hegemonic assumptions and, indeed, serve to reinforce them, and to ways that a truly critical multicultural criticism might theorize points of opposition and resistance. "64

It may well be that Palumbo-Liu's diagnosis of the anti-multiculturalist reaction on the part of the right, is true. If Hughes's definition of the phenomenon is accepted, there are serious difficulties in arguing against multiculturalism per se, without invoking outside causes or consequences. According to Hughes, multiculturalism "asserts that people with different roots can co-exist, that they can learn to read the image-banks of others, that they can and should look across the frontiers of race, language, gender and age



MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART NATIONAL BUREAU OF STANDARDS STANDARD REFERENCE MATERIAL 1010a (ANS) and ISO TEST CHART No. 2) advantage of the former and to forestall the latter.61

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without prejudice or illusion, and learn to think against the background of a hybridized society." This seems mild enough, save, perhaps, for the final concept, a "hybridized society". Many in North America are profoundly distressed at the way that new and old immigrants are now beginning to demand that they be accorded certain rights previously denied them. An obvious case in point is the linguistic issue, where the chief protagonists are the Spanish-speaking population. Until very recently, that someone who chose to make the United States their home would be required to be proficient in English, was hardly questioned. In the present situation, not only is that patently not the case, but it is commonly believed that minority languages, according to multiculturalism, far from ceding to the importance of the language of the majority, should be preserved and encouraged. In this aspect, the United States seems to be following the immigration policy which has been in force for many years in Canada.

Hughes considers that multiculturalism "proposes [...] that some of the most interesting things in history and culture happen at the interface between cultures. It wants to study border situations, not only because they are fascinating in themselves, but because understanding them may bring with it a little hope for the world." However, Ehrenreich writes of "the silly and obnoxious side" of multiculturalism which she identifies as the phenomenon of political correctness. She sees it as a form of snobbery, easily mocked both by the right and by the left. The conflict over multiculturalism, from Narveson's point of view, does not lie in an interest in diversity for its own sake. She considers that seen from this angle multiculturalism has instructive

value and facilitates accommodation to the presence of minorities, encouraging interest in diverse cultural manifestations. Rather, problems arise when minority cultures seek equal status with the majority culture. This last posture is illustrated in the following excerpt from an article by Iris Marion Young. The author contrasts "transformational assimilation", which accepts specific policies such as affirmative action as necessary and appropriate means for transforming institutions so that they accommodate to the assimilationist ideal, with "conformist assimilation", which expects disadvantaged groups that differ from the norm to conform to status quo institutions and norms. Yet both models of assimilation regard group difference as negative and undesirable, and consequently consider group difference to be a liability or disadvantage:⁷⁰

Under these circumstances, a politics that asserts the positivity of group difference is liberating and empowering. In the act of reclaiming the identity the dominant culture has taught them to despise and affirming it as an identity to celebrate, the oppressed remove double consciousness. I am just what they say I am - a Jewboy, a colored girl, a dyke, or a hag - and proud of it. No longer does one have the impossible project of trying to become something one is not under circumstances where the very trying reminds one of who one is. This politics asserts that oppressed groups have distinct cultures, experiences, and perspectives on social life with humanly positive meaning, some of which may even be superior to the culture and perspectives of mainstream society. The rejection and devaluation of one's culture and perspective should not be a condition of full participation in social life.⁷¹

Allan Bloom considers attitudes such as this one to be a reversal of the

vision of minorities was basically negative, since minorities were equated to factions, "selfish groups who have no concern as such for the common good."

Bloom reflects that, in contrast with older political thinkers, it was not their intention to suppress factions and educate "a united or homogeneous citizenry."

What they did was to construct "an elaborate machinery to contain factions in such a way that they would cancel one another and allow for the pursuit of the common good." Faction was tolerated in order that the good be achieved for it was still the guiding consideration in their thought. "The Founders wished to achieve a national majority concerning the fundamental rights and then prevent that majority from using its power to overturn those fundamental rights."

What disturbs Bloom is his perception of twentieth-century social science's stance, in which he contemplates the disappearance of the common good, and similarly, the negative view of minorities:

The very idea of majority - now understood to be selfish interest - is done away with in order to protect the minorities. This breaks the delicate balance between majority and minority in Constitutional thought. In such a perspective, where there is no common good, minorities are no longer problematic, and the protection of them emerges as the central function of government Where this leads is apparent[...] Groups or individuals who really care as opposed to those who have lukewarm feelings, deserve special attention or special rights for their "intensity" or "commitment" the new political validation, which replaces reason. The Founding fathers wished to reduce

and defang fanaticism, whereas [this] encourages it.73

Once again, I do not subscribe to the polarity of views that feminism, gay rights, multiculturalism and activists for victim rights seem to inspire. There is gross oversimplification of the issues if one has to be forced into one or other camp willy nilly. Undoubtedly, there are many traditions and practices of mainstream culture which should and must be preserved, while the ever-growing presence of minorities within our midst cannot be ignored, nor, still less, minimized. Nationalism and ethnic cleansing, unhappily, are not mere spectres of the past. Europe, which often prides itself on its ancient culture, in the mid 1990s has looked on while terrible atrocities were being committed to further these evils. America, with a large influx of immigrants in recent years, especially of Asians, is an increasingly complex and cosmopolitan society. Just as in former times the authority of men over women was totally unquestioned, so was the supremacy of the white man over people of other races. The relationship of men and women is changing, and in the same way people of different races are having to learn to live together. However, whether the way to achieve greater harmony and justice lies through the tenets of PC is another question.

The virtue of PC is that it does address these questions, but I believe that its proposals are over-ambitious. George Bornstein wrote ironically that the predicament of Jewish men of his generation is that they went directly from being discriminated against for being Jewish to being discriminated against for being white males, without ever passing through a period of popularity.⁷⁴ There is a mournful truth behind this observation, for it appears that everybody

needs to have someone to kick. Someone is always going to be at the bottom of the pile, and when that someone is replaced by someone else, the discrimination continues although its target has changed.

Richard Abel, a professor of Law at the University of California at Los Angeles, gave a series of lectures in England that were published in a very interesting book under the title of *Speech and Respect*. The following passage endorses what I believe, and provides food for thought about many popular views and opinions about the roles of victims in society:

If neutrality is willful blindness and individual choice is always constrained, the responsibilities of power cannot be fulfilled by simple deference to the oppressed. Contrary to Arnold Toynbee's naïve faith, they are not always morally superior. Quite the contrary, subordinate people typically express their powerlessness by directing resentment away from the dominant, who are too remote or frightening, to more vulnerable targets: rural Southern whites and urban ethnics at African Americans, African Americans at Jews and now Koreans, West European workers at immigrants, East Africans at East Indians, Southeast Asians at Chinese. Middle class women cope with the patriarchal division of labour by hiring working class women, often women of colour, as housekeepers, thereby reproducing class and racial inequality. Black men respond to racial subordination by oppressing black women in popular music, blax-ploitation films, and of course sexual and domestic behaviour.75

NOTES

- 1. Friedman, Op. cit., p. 14.
- 2. Op. cit., p. 14.
- 3. Fish, There's No Such Thing, Op. cit., p. 294.
- 4. Friedman, Op. cit., p. 22.
- 5. Cameron, Verbal Hygiene, Op. cit., p. 198.
- 6. Hughes, Op. cit., p. 21. See also D'Souza, Op. cit., p. 212: "Women's Studies even has its own distinctive terminology. Professors frequently speak of (her)story and malestream thought. The term freshman is now first-year student, one must say Ms instead of Miss, waiters are waitpersons or waitrons, committeees are headed by chairpersons or chairs. Some feminist teachers won't spell the term women because it includes the word men; instead, they prefer wimmin or wombyn. One professor at Washington University in St. Louis refuses to use the word seminar because it smacks of masculinity; instead she prefers the term ovular; a faculty women's committee at McGill cannot bring itself to say seminal. President James Freedman of Dartmouth, who calls himself a feminist, accuses the Dartmouth Review of 'ad hominem and ad feminem' Yale historian Howard Lamar says that his course on 'Cowboys and Indians' should now be called 'Cowpersons and native Americans.' It is now commonplace in scholarly books and journals throughout the humanities, to find the term 'she' used generically, as in 'When a scientist makes a discovery, she submits it for peer review."
- 7. Margaret Doyle, *The A-Z of Non-Sexist Language*, (London: The Women's Press Ltd, 1995), p. 2.
- 8. For an explanation of this view, see Stuart Hall, "Some 'Politically Incorrect' Pathways Through PC", in Dunant (ed.) Op. cit., p. 178-9: "For example, the old left critique that PC concerns itself with irrelevant and trivial issues as compared with the 'real' problems of poverty, unemployment and economic disadvantage which it ought to be addressing is patently unacceptable. It is the product of an archaic view, a sort of crass, low-flying materialism, that 'class' is more real and simple to address than, say, gender; that 'class', because it is linked to the economic, is somehow more materially determining, and that the economic factors work as it were on their own, outside of their social and ideological, their gendered and 'raced' conditions of existence. This seems to me absolutely wrong; and clinging to it is representative of the way in which, despite everything that has happened in the last

three decades to disturb or challenge its assumptions, a traditionalist conception of 'left politics' remains rock solid and deeply embedded in the collective consciousness (even, surprisingly, among some committed feminists!)"

- 9. Op. cit., p. 3.
- 10. Ibid., p. 62.
- 11. Ibid., p. 62-63.
- 12. Ibid., p. 63.
- 13. Ibid., p. 63.
- 14. Ibid., p. 64.
- 15. Ibid., p. 64.
- 16. Marilyn Schwartz and the Task Force on Bias-Free Language of the Association of American University Presses, Guidelines for Bias-Free Writing, (Bloomington In: Indiana University Press, 1995), p. 2.
- 17. Op. cit., p. 2. The text referred to is the following: ""My great women teachers in high school were suffragists. They transmitted the feminist message. One of them, Mrs. Gray, my English teacher, told the story of the gentle lady who invited a gentleman to have tea with her. In the course of the afternoon the conversation turned to the suffrage movement. 'How absurd,' the gentleman said. 'Think of your cook voting.' To which she replied sweetly, 'Yes, I often do. You see, he does.'"
- 18. *Ibid.*, p. 3. The text referred to is the following: "Do ritualized aggression and lethal conflict serve similar functions among humans? Alcock...concludes that most threatening or violent disputes are employed to resolve contested ownership over scarce or potentially limiting resources[...] Sociologist Van den Berghe[...] interprets intergroup warfare as a rational means of gaining livestock, women, and slaves, gaining or keeping territory, or gaining, controlling, and exploiting new territory."
- 19. Ibid., p. 6.
- 20. Cameron, Verbal Hygiene, Op. cit., p. 19.
- 21. Op. cit., p. 19.
- Ibid., p. 19.
 For further examples of the prescriptivist interpretation to feminists' demands, see Cameron, p. 118: "David Crystal (1984) noted that the

feminist campaign against sexist language was among the most successful instances of prescriptivism in living memory; Jenny Cheshire (1984) put the success of non-sexist language down, conversely, to natural linguistic evolution in the face of social change. These extremes -prescriptive conspiracy or quasi-organic evolution effected by the agency of no one at all- are all we have been given by way of explanation on this subject."

- 23. John Fekete, *Moral Panic: Biopolitics Rising* (Montreal: Robert Davies Publishing, 1995), p. 14.
- 24. Op. cit., p. 27-28.
- 25. Ibid., p. 28.
- See Catherine MacKinnon, "Sexuality", in Arthur and Shapiro, Op. cit., p. 81: "Compare victims' reports of rape with women's reports of sex. They look a lot alike. Compare victims' reports of rape with what pornography says is sex. They look a lot alike. In this light, the major distinction between intercourse (normal) and rape (abnormal) is that the normal happens so often that one cannot get anyone to see anything wrong with it. Which also means that anything sexual that happens often and one cannot get anyone to consider wrong is intercourse, not rape, no matter what was done. The distinctions that purport to divide this territory look more like the ideological supports for normalizing the usual male use and abuse of women as 'sexuality' through authoritatively pretending that whatever is exposed of it is deviant."
- 27. Ibid., p. 28.
- 28. Ibid., p. 334.
- 29. Ibid., p 334.
- 30. Linda Grant, "Sex and the Single Student: The Story of Date Rape", in Dunant, Op. cit., p. 81.
- 31. Op. cit., p. 82.
- 32. Ibid., p. 84.
- 33. Ibid., p. 84.
- 34. *Ibid.*, p. 85.
- 35. Fekete, Op. cit., p. 23.
- 36. Grant, Op. cit., p. 87.

- 37. Op. cit., p. 89.
- 38. Ibid., p. 85-86. See also, Camille Paglia, "An Interview About Sex and Date Rape", in Arthur and Shapiro, Op. cit., p. 100-101, about a German magazine reporter who talked to her: "She lives in Brooklyn, and she lets this guy in whom she shouldn't have, and she got raped. She said that, because she's a feminist, of course she had to go for counseling. She said it was awful, that the minute she arrived there, the rape counselors were saying, 'You will never recover from this, what's happened to you is so terrible.' She said, what the hell, it was a terrible experience, but she was going to pick herself up, and it wasn't that big a deal. The whole system now is designed to make you feel that you are maimed and mutilated forever if something like that happens. She said it made her feel worse. It's absolutely American -it is not European- and the whole system is filled with these clichés about sex. I think there is a fundamental prudery about sex in all this."
- 39. Ibid., p. 90.
- 40. Béruhé, Op. cit., p. 80.
- 41. Paglia, Op. cit., p. 101.

 See also, Hughes, Op. cit., p. 9: "Meanwhile, the new orthodoxy of feminism is abandoning the image of the independent, existentially responsible woman in favour of woman as helpless victim of male opression treat her as equal before the law, and you are compounding her victimization."
- 42. Said, "The Politics of Knowledge", Op. cit., p. 183.
- 43. Mark Mirsky, "False Gods", *Partisan Review*, Vol. v60. ISS: n4. Fall, 1993, p. 668.
- 44. Dunant, Op. cit., p. xiii.
- 45. Hughes, Op. cit., p. 7.
- 46. D'Souza, Op. cit., p. 214.
- 47. Hughes, Op. cit., p. 7.
- 48. Op. cit., p. 10. This paragraph continues in the following way: "The problems of this inward-turning were sketched long ago by Goethe, speaking to Eckermann. "Epochs which are regressive, and in the process of dissolution, are always subjective, whereas the trend in all progressive epochs is objective..... Every truly excellent endeavour turns from within toward the world, as you see in the great epochs which were truly in progression and aspiration, and which were all objective

in nature."

- 49. Bracken, Op. cit., p. 76.
- 50. Jan Narveson, in Friedman and Narveson, Op. cit., p. 87.
- 51. Op. cit., p. 87-88.
- 52. Gitlin, Op. cit., p. 188.
- 53. Op. cit., p. 188.

See also, John Pick, *The Modern Newspeak*, (London: Harrap, 1984), p. 146: "the claims of the victim do have to be heard, because they may cast new light on history. But they have to pass exactly the same tests as anyone else's, or debate fails and truth suffers. The PC cover for this is the idea that all statements about history are expressions of power: history is only written by the winners and truth is political and unknowable, unless some victim knows it in his or her bones."

See further, Edward Said, "The Politics of Knowledge", Op. cit., p. 181: "If you are weak, your affirmation of identity for its own sake amounts to little more than saying that you want a kind of attention easily and superficially granted, like the attention given an individual in a crowded room at roll call. Once having such recognition, the subject has only to sit there silently as the proceedings unfold as if in his or her absence."

- 54. Melanie Phillips, Op. cit., p. 39.
- 55. Op. cit., p. 36.

See also p. 51: "Family values, and in particular the rise in the number of single parent families, have become another highly contentious issue. It has become extremely difficult to say in liberal circles that children are by and large best served when they are brought up by both their natural parents. This is despite an overwhelming body of evidence, both from social scientists and professionals working with children, that this is the case. But to say so invites professional or political marginalisation and rejection. This is because people are anxious above all else not to give offence to parents who may be divorced or who never married. This powerful imperative, to give no offence, means that no one behaviour can be held to be superior to any other."

- 56. Hughes, Op. cit., p. 115.
- 57. Op. cit., p. 115.
- 58. See George Bornstein, "Can Literary Study Be Politically Correct?", The Sewanee Review, vol. 100, no. 2, 1992, p. 287: "What both Marxist totalitarianism and political correctness have in common [...] is the idea of group as opposed to individual identity and rights, and the

fact that such strategies of identity have been central to the most appalling oppressions of the twentieth century ought at the very least to give us pause about invoking them as somehow automatically on the side of liberation."

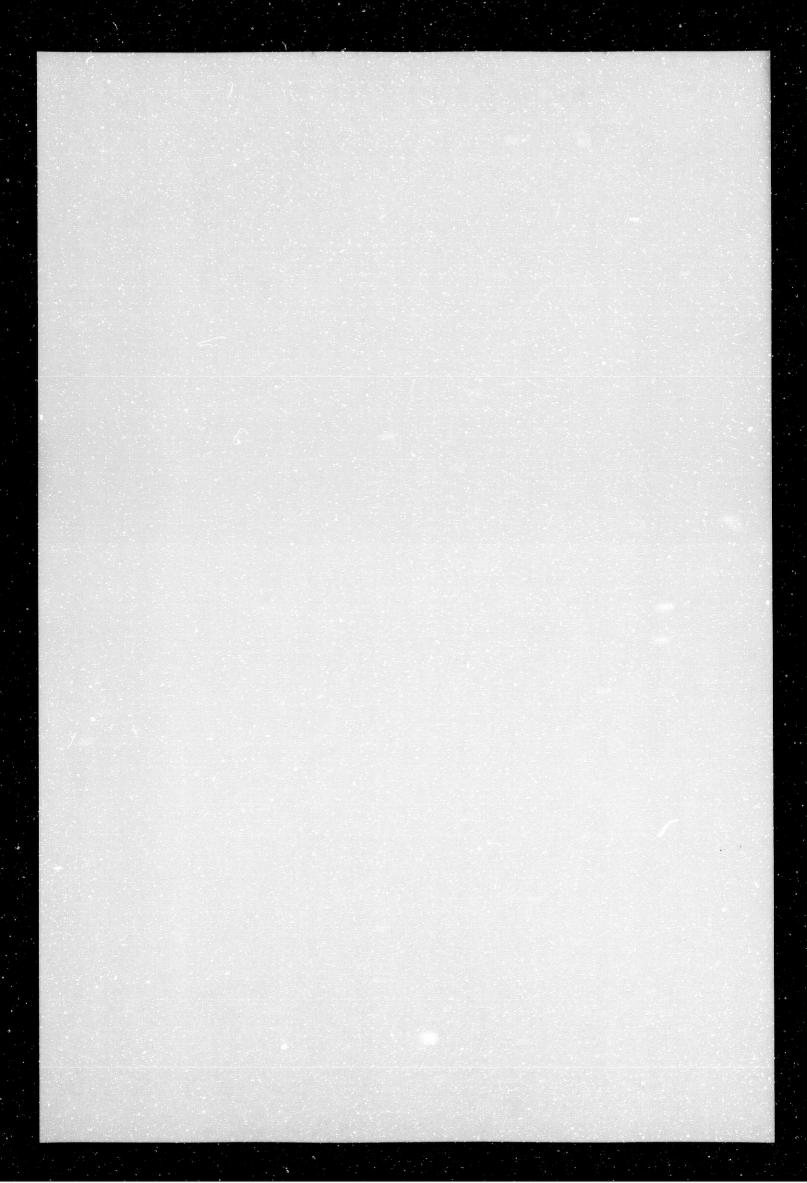
See also, Stanley Rothman, "Tradition and Change: The University Under Stress" in Howard Dickman, (ed.) *The Imperiled Academy*, (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1993), p. 39-40: "many intellectuals have switched from a former Marxist stand to a new 'multiculturalism,' which they consider to be closely tied to what has come to be called 'postmodernity.'"

- 59. Celia Roberts, Evelyn Davies, and Tom Jupp, Language and Discrimination: A Study of Communication in Multi-ethnic Workplaces, (Harlow: Longman, 1992), p. 371.
- 60. David Palumbo-Liu, (ed.) *The Ethnic Canon: Histories, Institutions and Interventions*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), p. 9.
- 61. Op. cit., p. 8.
- 62. Ibid., p. 5.
- 63. Ibid., p. 15.
- 64. Ibid., p. 15.
- 65. Hughes, Op. cit., p. 83.
- 66. See Allan Bloom, "The Closing of the American Mind", Op. cit., p. 11:

 "At the root of this change in morals was the presence in the United States of men and women of a great variety of nations, religions, and races, and the fact that many were badly treated because they belonged to these groups. Franklin Roosevelt declared that we want "a society which leaves no one out." Although the natural rights inherent in our regime are perfectly adequate to the solution of this problem, provided these outsiders adhere to them (i.e., they become insiders by adhering to them), this did not satisfy the thinkers who influenced our educators, for the right to vote and other political rights did not automatically produce social acceptance. The equal protection of the laws did not protect a man from contempt and hatred as a Jew, an Italian, or a Black."
- 67. Op. cit., p. 84.
- 68. Ehrenreich, Op. cit., p. 335.
- 69. Narveson, Op. cit., p. 78.

- 70. Iris Marion Young, "Social Movements and the Politics of Difference", in Arthur and Shapiro, Op. cit., p. 203-204.
- 71. Op. cit., p. 204.
- 72. Allan Bloom, "The Closing of the American Mind", Op. cit., p. 12.
- 73. *Ibid.*, p. 12.

 See also, D'Souza, *Op. cit.*, p. 215: "Marching under the banner of equality, the new race and gender scholarship seems in reality to promote principles of inequality minority sentiments are placed on a pedestal while majority sentiments are placed on trial."
- 74. Bornstein, Op. cit., p. 284.
- 75. Richard Abel, Speech and Respect, (London: Stevens and Sons, 1994), p. 126.



d) Political correctness and the language of the press

The importance in our society of the media of mass communication does not need to be stressed, and in the case of PC its influence has been very great in shaping popular perceptions of what political correctness entails and about the latest developments in the PC debate. Coverage of PC issues can be found in all the media, be they radio, television or the written press, but discussion in this section will concentrate primarily on the press, for two reasons: in the first place, it is precisely through the press that a major part of the PC debate has been conducted, and moreover, records from newspapers and journals are more appropriate for the literary framework of this dissertation. Topics which in the ordinary course of events would not appear to warrant the attention of the general reader of a newspaper have taken up page upon page of reporting on both sides of the Atlantic. Although PC originated in America and attention here will be principally devoted to the American press coverage of the issues connected with PC, interest in Britain and elsewhere in Europe for the phenomenon has been accentuated through the press reports of PC incidents in the United States, and as there are certain interesting differences between British and American press procedure, attention will also be given to the press in Britain.

In previous sections it was shown how multiculturalism, and PC in general, disregard neutrality as a virtue and indeed claim that it is an impossibility, in Richard Abel's words "willful blindness"; earlier in his book he sets forth certain reasons why neutrality does not exist: "Neutrality is unattainable. Indeed, no one wants it. All speakers, whether employed or supported by government, are expressing their partisan positions. Balance is a chimera; every mixture of views favours some over others." While it might not be difficult to accept these reasons as the truth in some contexts, when it comes to the press, to the printed word, the abdication of the principle of neutrality proves to be far more complicated, for as Lauren Kessler and Duncan McDonald stress, free speech is considered a basic right in the United States. The American Constitution's First Amendment protects it, and it has, on the whole, been upheld since the Constitution was drafted more than two hundred years ago, despite numerous legal and legislative actions.²

Writing with Substance and Style, devote a chapter to the responsibilities of the mass communicator, in which they declare that "Americans consider the dissemination of information throughout society (via various channels of mass communication) necessary for the functioning of a democracy." Their contention is that "[m]ost people -even those momentarily angered by a sexist advertisement or a biased news story- would agree that media messages help them participate in the political, economic and cultural life of the country."

Hence, the media of mass communication fulfills a two-fold mission: the spread of information, and also, participation in the everyday world of business, since except for public broadcasting and a few foundation-supported periodicals, the American mass media are *for profit* organizations. Their purpose is no different than cosmetic manufacturers or soft drink corporations, as they all are businesses with an overriding interest in maximising revenues. Their parameters are detailed by Kessler and McDonald as follows:

They want (and need) to keep owners, investors and perhaps stockholders happy. They want (and need) to increase sales. Like other companies, they produce a product for a price. The difference -and it is a big one- is that the media's product is the message. And this product, unlike shampoo or cola, has been revered by Americans since the founding of the country. This product has a special place in our society.⁵

Journalists whose function is not directly related to the business aspect, are accordingly faced with a potential dichotomy, particularly those who present and analyse current events, for they carry out a highly important function in society; on the one hand they should hold paramount the people's right to information above all other concerns, but on the other they are employed by for-profit businesses. As Kessler and McDonald reveal, the problem is compounded by the fact that many newspapers and magazines are owned by megacorporations which control hundreds of other 'properties' and are answerable to thousands of stockholders. The majority of the broadcast stations in the United States are affiliated with one of the three major networks, owned in turn by parent companies with numerous other business interests.

"As business organizations, the media have a primary responsibility to their owners and investors. As news organizations, they have a primary responsibility to the public. Can they simultaneously seek the truth and a profit? Not always. There is a deep and often unresolvable conflict between the goals of doing good and making money." Thus, the social role of the mass media is not altogether clear, for the boundary between the interests of the business enterprise and those of a public service do not always coincide, and it is when they do not tally that an ideological conflict may arise.

The ideological nature of the role that newspapers play in society is emphasized by Tony Trew. Most newspapers' fundamental concern is to give account of information about what is happening, and this dissemination of news becomes ideological precisely because all information necessarily involves theory and ideology, and furthermore, the very information gives rise to a constant flow of material which in turn requires ideological processing. Yet the presence of an ideological slant to the imparting of information is not universally acknowledged, for as Abel states, in America business interests tend to override other considerations.

According to Abel, in this respect the American media differ from their British counterpart in that the latter do not make such claims to neutrality. He provides an example of how media decisions are governed by their source of revenue -in this case a decision on the content of television programming in America- with an incident which occurred in KABC-TV in Los Angeles. One of their ratings sweeps coincided with the Gulf war, during which an unspecified number of viewers telephoned in to the station in protest at its

coverage of anti-war demonstrations. From that time onwards the station simply ignored all further demonstrations, thereby avoiding the alienation of these potential clients and consumers. As Abel also remarks, it is the media which decide how much coverage to devote to presidential candidates, which in itself is a potent symbol of the power wielded, and reminds us that politicians and public persons in general must beware of falling foul of the media.

In a book published in 1991 entitled Language in the News: Discourse and Ideology in the Press, Roger Fowler explains how the professional journalist's self-image on the question of impartiality has been subject to increasing challenge from students of the media. He cites the Glasgow University Media Group and the University of Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, which, in a number of research publications have put forward a different interpretation of news practices, generally current "among sociologists and other students of the media." This model posits news as socially constructed, and in consequence, the choice of which events are reported does not reflect "the intrinsic importance of those events, but reveals the operation of a complex and artificial set of criteria for selection." Following upon this selection the news undergoes processes of transformation as it is encoded for publication. "Both 'selection' and 'transformation' are guided by reference, generally unconscious, to ideas and beliefs."11 Moreover, students of the media find that such propositions tend to reflect the ideas of the controlling groups in an industrial-capitalist society, because news is an industry with its own commercial self-interest. "Thus news is a practice:

a discourse which, far from neutrally reflecting social reality and empirical facts, intervenes in what Berger and Luckmann call 'the social construction of reality'."¹²

That newspapers only offer a partial version of the world would seem to be obvious since they must inevitably select, reorder and transform an item of news. Bob Hodge notes how they also distort and suppress in order to achieve a final product that recognizably conforms to the characteristics of a particular newspaper and not another. The readers of a specific newspaper know in advance what they are buying, and as he states,

have expectations which the paper is able to confirm, irrespective of what the world chose to do the day before. This, the real commodity that keeps the readership loyal, is more than a distinctive style of presenting common material. It is a structure that pre-exists the specific content. This structure causes systematic bias of content, but more importantly it is itself a content. Each individual copy confirms a version of the world, or demonstrates a capacity to assimilate events which could challenge that version.¹³

Melanie Phillips gives an example of how the sense of expectation of a newspaper's content can be betrayed in recounting how she -of leftist political persuasion- "began to become uncomfortably aware" that Tory newspapers were expressing certain views that she realised were true, and which were at the same time being denied by the more liberal press. In particular, these opinions were to do with the education system, which became the butt of increasingly aggressive criticism of teachers' failure to teach children properly.

"Emphasis on literacy and numeracy was being replaced by a child-centred philosophy that devalued rules and was inimical to the imparting of knowledge; and [...] the children who were suffering most were those from disadvantaged backgrounds for whom schools were the one lifeline out of the ghettos of poverty."

Her personal dilemma was to find opinions with which she agreed in newspapers which represented political options she repudiated. This proved to be the point of departure for her doubts about some of the manifestations of political correctness.

Having established the general context and some constraints of the mass media, and in particular the press, and having noted that each newspaper presents a certain style and content which the loyal reader will easily identify, we will proceed to examine particular aspects of style and content which are central to the political correctness debate.

Although the PC debate is essentially a phenomenon of the late eighties and the nineties, many of the issues that cause controversy date back to previous decades. The Washington Post Deskbook on Style¹⁵ that was published in 1978 contains many references to some of the principal issues that have already been discussed in the present study. Chapter IV, which comes under the title "Taste and Sensibilities", contains ten sub-divisions with the following headings: Age, Courtesy terms and professional titles, Dialect, Identification of juveniles, Identification of race, Names and initials, Obituaries, Profanity and obscenities, Religion, and Sexism. They all provide very interesting guidelines to the terms in which The Washington Post requires its journalists to couch their articles, and of particular interest for the purposes

of the study of PC are Identification of Race and Sexism.

Identification of Race seeks to help the newspaper's journalists to decide when it may be considered pertinent or not to include mention of a person's race, establishing three principles, of which this is the first:

Avoid identifying race or ethnic background unless the information is relevant. It may be so:

- a. In stories involving politics, social action, social conditions, achievement and other matters where race can be a distinguishing factor.
- b. Where usage has sanctioned the description: black leader, Irish tenor, Polish wedding
- c. In reporting an incident that cannot be satisfactorily explained without reference to race. However, the mere fact that an incident involves persons of different races does not, of itself, mean that racial tags should be used. And when the racial identification is used, the races of all involved should be mentioned.¹⁶

Clearly this recommendation seeks to avoid an explicit reference to racial identity wherever considered feasible and the underlying reason implicit in the first recommendation is borne out by the second: "Do not mention a person's race in describing criminal suspects or fugitives unless the rest of the description is detailed enough to be meaningful. Sketchy descriptions are often meaningless and may apply to large numbers of innocent persons."

Evidently, racial stereotyping which views certain races as the principal members of the criminal class inspires this guideline. However, it is the third recommendation which is of particular interest:

When referring to people of Spanish and Portuguese blood, the terms Hispano, Hispanic and Hispano-American are preferable to Latin, Latino, Chicano and Spanish American. (Technically, persons of Portuguese blood are Luso-Americans, but the term is not familiar enough for newspaper use.) The terms Latin American, Central American and South American may be used in a geographic sense. The terms Mexican American, Portuguese American, etc. are always valid when referring to culture, food and the like. Puerto Ricans should be called Puerto Ricans rather than Hispano-Americans (which suggests a southwestern U.S. heritage); however, Puerto Rican culture may be described as Spanish or Hispanic. 18

From the preceding guideline it can be seen that *The Washington Post* in 1978 is not concerned with the moral principles behind the avoidance of certain racial epithets -the term *Luso-American* is considered inappropriate because it is little known. The words "taste" and "sensibility" in the title of the chapter indicate the priorities: the book is conceived to ensure that certain proprieties are observed and that the newspaper should not lapse into terms regarded as tasteless or inaccurate, while always maintaining the idea of "style" as the principal consideration. This principle is reflected in the section on sexism, whose first guideline serves as a preamble:

Sexism -and the arbitrary stereotyping of men and women and their roles in life- breeds and reinforces inequality. But some words and forms are so historically and culturally imbedded that they defy efforts to eradicate them. Moreover, awkward and self-conscious new forms can interfere with readers' comprehension. Thus the rules in this section are imperfect.

What matters most is to write and edit with a sense of equality, appropriateness and dignity for both sexes. (Emphases added.)¹⁹

An initial reaction to this text is that it would seem that one effect of the PC debate has been to render it much more difficult to utter similar sentiments. During the intervening years since this book on newspaper style was published, as the climate of opinion has become highly radicalized, any attempt on the part of a serious publication to echo the above beliefs would need to adopt a much more defensive tone.²⁰

The section on sexism continues in the following way:

2. Life and career roles.

Avoid stereotyping careers and jobs. Do not suggest that wage-earning is always done by the man and housekeeping by the woman.

NO	YES
The average worker with a wife and	The average family of 4
two children	
Housewives are feeling the effects	Consumers are feeling the
	effects
Mothers were warned that the toy	Parents were warned that the
could	toy could

3. Human portrayals.

a. Portray members of both sexes as having human strengths and weaknesses, not masculine or feminine ones. Women can be bold, logical or career-oriented; men can be gentle, immature or frightened. b. Avoid descriptions of women that are demanding or condescending (scatter-brained, catty, bra-burner). Avoid descriptions of men that focus on ineptness around the home and dependence on women for

meals and health care.

NO

c. Avoid descriptions and photos that concentrate on physical features, clothes and habits unless they are pertinent, and unless comparable terms would be used regardless of the subject's sex.

d. Use parallel references to the sexes.

the men and the ladies the men and the women

the women and the men

YES

man and wife husband and wife²¹

A further indication of how much, in a relatively short period, the times have changed with respect to sexism, is seen in the recommendation not to use the address form Ms. "except in direct quotations, in discussing the term itself or for special effect." In the decade of the nineties Ms. is the most widely-used form of address for women, at least in professional circles. Similarly, with reference to occupations and titles, one guideline is that "where no gender-free term has achieved wide acceptance, use terms that accurately identify the person's sex unless they are awkward or artificial: Democratic chairman Robert Strauss, Republican chairwoman Mary Louise Smith; department spokeswoman", while it is suggested that "most forms using -one. -person, and -people (chairone, chairperson, chairpeople) are awkward and hence unacceptable unless a known, formal title." This section ends with three more guidelines whose interest for the purposes of this study warrants their inclusion in full:

[a]. In reference to humanity in general, gender-free terms can frequently be used. But traditional forms are in many cases more