

tered by the work they do. Although Holstun declares himself weary of reading the same Stanley Fish article year after year (a charge to which I cheerfully plead guilty), it seems that he has not read that article closely enough, or—and this is more likely—that he has read it as issuing from the fictional being he is so eager to construct. I say this not in anger or even in sorrow but in a spirit of resignation; for as a wiser head than mine once observed, that's show business.

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The First Professor of English



To the Editor:

As an alumnus of University College, London—"Gower Street's godless academy," a disgruntled Anglican called it because it did not demand the subscription to the Thirty-Nine Articles required of students at Oxford and Cambridge—I was much interested in Franklin E. Court's "Social and Historical Significance of the First English Literature Professorship in England" (103 [1988]: 796–807).

Court says of Thomas Dale, first holder of that title, "We know little about him or his courses" and "What little we know about Canon Dale before his appointment reveals that he was a Cambridge graduate and an aspiring author of sorts" (796). Court could have found out more by consulting the article about Dale in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, by George Granville Bradley, himself a noted educator and cleric, brother of A. C. and F. H. Bradley. Dale had quite a successful career. A poor boy, he was fortunate in making influential friends, notably Sir Robert Peel. After Dale's graduation from Cambridge and ordination in 1822 and various minor clerical and educational posts, Peel named him vicar of St. Bride's in London and later a canon of St. Paul's Cathedral; still later he moved to an even more important parish, St. Pancras, and ended his career with the prestigious appointment of dean of Rochester. As for Dale's being an aspiring author, Bradley reports that in his twenties he published a number of books of poetry, the first of which went into several editions, and a two-volume verse translation of the tragedies of Sophocles; during his lifetime "he published upwards of seventy works."

Dale's short tenures of the chair of English literature in what then called itself the University of London and a little later in its crosstown rival, the Anglican-oriented King's College, were only stepping-stones in the career of an obviously upwardly mobile young man. It seems somewhat strange that men like Brougham and Bentham, resolutely opposed to the established church's control of education, should have consented to the appointment of

a "high church evangelical," as Bradley calls Dale; perhaps they were attempting to appease the criticism "London University" was receiving because of its "godlessness" (among other things). As one of Dale's successors, R. W. Chambers, Quain Professor of English at University College, writes in "Philologists at University College, London. The Beginnings (1828–1889)" (in his *Man's Unconquerable Mind*, London: Cape, 1939), "Dale is not interested in the new philology. What Dale is interested in is the morals of his class." He quotes Dale's *Introductory Lecture*, "I shall invariably aim to impart moral, as well as intellectual instruction. . . . In all my lectures I shall esteem it my duty—I trust I shall find it my delight—to inculcate lessons of virtue" (347). Chambers continues acidly, "He left us to find a new, and I trust, a more moral home, as first Professor of English Language and Literature in King's College, London." D. J. Palmer, in *The Rise of English Studies* (London: Oxford UP, 1965), quotes further from the lecture:

The gems with which it [English literature] is so copiously adorned sometimes require to be abstracted and exhibited with a careful hand, lest they convey pollution with the foul mass of daring profaneness or disgusting wantonness in which they are too often encrusted. Never will I suffer the eye of inexperienced youth to be dazzled by the brilliancy of genius, when its broad lustre obscures the deformity of vice. (20)

Needless to say, the Restoration comic dramatists found no place in his courses. But then, throughout the nineteenth century, most teachers of English literature were proclaiming the same high moral purpose. In a paper I gave at the English Institute ("The Study of Eighteenth-Century Literature: Past, Present, and Future," *New Approaches to Eighteenth-Century Literature*, ed. Phillip Harth, New York: Columbia UP, 1974), I suggested that Palmer's survey, confined to the British Isles, should be extended to take in the simultaneous rise of English studies in the other parts of the English-speaking world. Dale's American counterparts were equally "moral."

Dale hardly provides an attractive "role model" for his successors as professors of English literature. He had the misfortune to have among his pupils a bright boy who saw through him and made no secret of his detestation. John Ruskin twice suffered Dale's ministrations, once when he was thirteen and enrolled in a private school Dale ran, and later when he was seventeen and attended a short course under Dale at King's College. When he first encountered Dale, he showed him, with some pride, the grammar from which his mother had taught him Latin—a very reputable work, by Alexander Adam, rector of the Edinburgh High School. "Mr. Dale threw it back to me with a fierce bang upon his desk, saying (with accent and look of seven-times heated scorn), 'That's a *Scotch* thing!'" (Ruskin, *Works*, ed. Cook and Wedderburn, London: Allen, 1908, 34: 365). Ruskin records how deeply his boyish feelings were hurt at the insult, not only to him-

self but to his Scottish ancestry. He reports that at King's Dale taught Chaucer and other older writers in such a way that "the laugh of the hearer is generally at, not with, the author." He wrote for Dale an appreciative essay on Byron. Its fate might have been predicted: Dale had pronounced, "Lord Byron will quickly pass from notice, and is doomed to be exiled from the libraries of all virtuous men." Ruskin's essay was exiled to the depths of Dale's desk, where Dale's granddaughter, clearing out the desk many years later, discovered it.

If we English professors cannot feel very proud of our founding father, perhaps we may be justified in disowning him. Court seems a little unclear about the status of "the University of London." (A good account can be found in Negley Harte, *The University of London, 1836–1986: An Illustrated History*, London: Athlone, 1986.) It was no more than a proprietary joint-stock company—in modern terms, an "unaccredited" institution. It did not grant degrees, only a "certificate of honour," though of course there was no law to prevent its calling its teachers "professors" if it so wished. The situation was regularized in 1836, when a royal charter established what Harte calls "the University of London, Mark II," granting it the power to confer degrees and giving "the University of London, Mark I" (now demoted to "University College") and King's College the right to prepare students for its examinations for those degrees.

DONALD GREENE

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Reply:

I appreciate Donald Greene's interest in my article on the first English professorship at London's University College. It appears that Greene would have been happier with it if I had expanded the annotation. His gloss on Dale's life records commonplace information (as his reference to the brief *DNB* entry makes obvious), but an extended examination of Dale's life or of the peculiarities of his character is irrelevant to the substance of the article, which is an attempt to account for Henry Brougham's and the largely utilitarian University Council's choice of Dale over the other applicants. Greene acknowledges that it does seem "somewhat strange that men like Brougham and Bentham . . ." should appoint a high church clergyman. The article, however, intentionally downplays the religious issue and criticism of the university's secularism in favor of providing primary information drawn from unpublished material in the University College archives and from Brougham's life in order to recreate as faithfully as possible a record of what the council was looking for in their English professor. Dale's religious affiliation was far less important to the decision makers, mostly political liberals and philosophi-

cal radicals, than his claim to be able to include a course in English literature in his program of study and the fact that he was an experienced classroom teacher. Brougham and the council, as I state in the article, wanted to promote "literacy and 'good reading habits' nationally." They appointed Dale; Dale did not appoint himself. Research into his teaching career as well as the careers of other nineteenth-century English professors is better served by examining records of appointment, it seems to me, than by making judgments about these professors' characters, especially judgments based mainly on secondhand information.

Chambers's observation that Dale was primarily interested in teaching morality is based on concluding remarks in the last four pages of Dale's thirty-two-page published *Introductory Lecture*, where Dale acknowledges that as "a minister of the National Church" he is obliged to consider himself a moral as well as a mental instructor. The preceding twenty-eight pages, however, are a straightforward presentation of his program minus any intruding moralism. His unpublished course outline, noted on page 800 of my article, says nothing about morality. I suspect that Palmer took his cue from Chambers and the result has produced a "logrolling" effect that has made it easy for critics to dismiss Dale without carefully examining records at both University College and King's College. Dale may have alienated Chambers and hurt Ruskin's thirteen-year-old feelings (Greene appears not to think much of Dale either), but the fact remains that he was the first university professor in England to make the effort to teach British literature. Greene may want us to disown him, but his place in the history of the discipline is historical fact, and whether Ruskin or Chambers or Greene approves of his character or his morality is really beside the point.

Finally, although Greene questions my grasp of London University history, in my defense I must admit to having done my homework. I have spent a great deal of time at University College examining primary material related to the university's early history. And I have read Bellot's history of the college thoroughly. Whatever specifics of the early history I am supposed to be "unclear" about are unclear to me from Greene's letter. Nor do I think another reading of Negley Harte's recent commemorative, ceremonial history will turn up any new information on London University that I may have missed initially when I reviewed it for *Educational Studies* (19 [1988]: 167–70).

I must admit, however, that I was unaware of Chambers's 1939 article on the history of the philologists at University College, and I am extremely grateful to Greene for bringing it to my attention.

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