

LeCLAIR contra FRAZER

Prof. Frazer, I most humbly apologize, I apologize for my conduct, I apologize for being an atrocious student. My reading list is barely beyond the Marvel Comic stage, and even at that my powers for retaining any knowledge from what I have read are practically nil. I apologize for apparently knowing nothing about the English tradition, or its' varied implication. I apologize for my classroom manners. I apologize for my huge, vague generalizations, which amounted to windy expressions of ignorance. I apologize for my pitiful paper, pitiful exam, pitiful contribution to the study of English in general. I am exactly as you depict, a weepy, self-centered, hopelessly ignorant clod. I apologize for the fact that you felt personally attacked. I apologize for ever having doubted you at all...

Furthermore, Prof. Frazer, I apologize for some of my thoughts. I looked at the 1973-4 calendar, for example, and I noted fifteen names on the roster. Then I looked in the course descriptions and could only find those names twice or at best three times. In other departments the number of professors was smaller and their names appeared before a lot more course descriptions, some as many as five, six or even seven times. I must confess I doubted someone for something, and for that I apologize. For my thoughts were

very wicked. I thought to myself, "Strange," I thought, "so many people for one department." Then I thought of the numbers in each class compared to other arts classes I have disgraced with my presence, and I thought, "Imagine, some professors in the English Dept. must teach to twenty, while some professors in other arts departments must teach to two hundred or more." I apologize, for at that point I did lose a bit of faith in the department, but of course, it is no concern of mine. I even went so far as to grossly imagine what equality would mean in terms of salary. I was ignorant enough to think that

if you worked it out in terms of salary paid as proportional to people taught some English professors would be paid less than one or two thousand dollars per year. How hopelessly vulgar I was!

Yes, and even that is not the worst. My evil eyes led me to read the course descriptions. I discovered that the department offered precisely one, one semester course in translated continental literature. I went further and tried to find courses that directly linked literature to philosophy, politics, psychology, religion or any other obviously related fields. When I found there were none I said to myself, I confess it now, "Good Lord, all those people!" Then I tried to find

courses on creative technique and found there was one but it wasn't one being given. So I guess that stress must be placed on definite skills, such as intense study of poetics, but when I looked for these courses I only found one, and it was one semester. I wondered about what seminar courses taught what, and found there were only two seminar courses being taught per semester, and they said nothing about subject matter. Again I apologize, but to myself I thought, "God! All those people, all that money, for what?" I remember this all very sadly now but I must confess all.....

But by far my worst sin, my most horrible crime, was the fact that I had the unbelievable audacity to think about my fellow majors. I was sick enough to even give some merit to the idea that others might feel as I do. Of course, it is obvious now. My secrets are all out in the open. I am essentially illiterate & a spoiled brat. Nonetheless I persisted in my madness. I wondered why they were forced to take a survey course and then take courses from every major time period in that survey. I had the ridiculous idea that this was slightly unfair. I felt it would be much better if people would be allowed to have a bit more to say in what part of a tradition they wish to study. I actually thought it to be essential that courses be given where literature is discussed in terms of related studies. I actually thought it of utmost importance that creative writing be taught in many ways at all times. I actually thought that the number of people in the department as compared to the number of seminar courses being taught was out ragedous. I actually thought, imagine, I was actually insane enough to think it would be better if majors were only made to take the survey, and that they be allowed to study whatever parts of that tradition they wanted and in whatever manner they wanted. Imagine my blatantly stupid mind!!

In conclusion Prof. Frazer, may I again reiterate my most humble apologies. You are correct. The study of English is only for the more studious of our people, and here I am a most pathetic failure. I have been demented enough to cause your teaching methods to be questioned. I was wrong. You were right. You win.

Larry LeClair

What in God's name are you doing?

Some guys can go pelting down the Road of Life like an arrow. They never hesitate, never swerve, never even slow down.

But the rest of us get gnawed by these funny little questions. They come, unasked for, unwelcome and usually about two o'clock in the morning. They can stop you cold in your tracks. Samples: Is this all there is? If everything's working out for me, why am I bugged? What in God's name am I doing anyway?

If they persist, if they make you feel like some dim-wit robot programmed by someone else, maybe you should bless the questions, take advantage of the time-out, and think.

If you're asking yourself what in God's name you're doing, why not think about doing something in God's name?

That's right, a priest.
A Redemptorist.

It's an extraordinary life for the right man.

Ask us about it. Phone or write:

THE REDEMPTORIST PRIESTS

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