ism in disguise, even the defining mark of professionalism. What Fish does not concede, either in that essay or in the *PMLA* column, is that it is hard to complain about antiprofessionalism on behalf of professionalism if the former is simply more of the latter.

To participate in this profession is to accept the profession's account of its "commodity" as a resistance to professionalism. This, perhaps, is the most immediate source of the essay's polemical confusion. For the profession is not served by single-minded professionalism: divided against itself it must be. Indeed, if we explicitly embraced professionalism as the horizon of our interests, we would not have a profession at all.

"No Bias, No Merit" is best considered as a step on the way towards a conception of professionalism in which our occupational interests would be seen as producing the "others" that produced them, with neither side serving as origin or ground. Perhaps the most striking thing about Fish's essay is its naïveté in urging professionals to make a clean break with their present delusions and freely choose to become psychically and professionally whole. Against this view, it could be argued that we are (as Nietzsche, Marx, Freud, and others have argued) always "divided against ourselves" and that the professionalism/transcendence resistance Fish discusses is just one site, one local manifestation, of a dividedness for or against which it is pointless to argue.

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To the Editor:

Reading Stanley Fish's guest column in the October *PMLA*, I felt like I was back in the class I took with Fish in graduate school—willing to grant him the premise of his argument but unwilling to grant the conclusion he preferred to draw from that premise.

I agree with him that the notion of intrinsic merit is a myth and that criticism does not operate in a political vacuum. I agree too that the presence of scholarly luminaries in a discussion enhances the status of that discussion and propels it toward deepening insight—both by providing their own luminous insights and by drawing other minds into the discussion. But I don't see that this is an argument against blind submission, at least not a compelling argument. And of course my understanding of the matter rests on my own political agenda. It seems to me that what Fish is trying to do, in his argument, is to extend tenure into the realm of publishing—and that the forces behind such a move are precisely the forces that don't need further support.

I think back on the little composition discussion group Fish organized at Hopkins—weekly gatherings of grad students in his office to knock around strategies for teaching writing. He was just becoming interested in the field of composition pedagogy; it seemed to me (I had been interested in the field for several years and was working in it) that it seemed to him (who apparently had not) to be the next hot issue on the horizon. And reading his *PMLA* piece, I couldn't help but think that the reason he had become interested (more or less suddenly) in these matters—he and other powerful types—was that a growing body of work in the field had begun to come to his attention. But this body of work was being done initially not by scholars like Stanley Fish but by folks like me, and if we had discarded the policy of blind submission, this body of work would have been less likely to see the light of day.

The fact is that as much as Fish may enjoy publishing—even need to publish—and as much as our profession may enjoy and need his work to be published, I need my work published more. The vineyard that he toiled in and that he suggests I toil in is the vineyard of blind submission; if the rules are changed, then my toil becomes less freely rewarded. I lose, and (according to my example in the previous paragraph) he loses, and the profession loses.

Again, I'm not suggesting that there's anything wrong with institutionalized power. Our profession depends on it and grows within it. But our profession depends on and grows by challenges to that power as well—as Fish's own recent interest in canon reformation should make plain to him—and there is something wrong, to my mind, with enhancing the power of those already far more powerful at the expense of those aspiring to join them. His piece strikes me as a bit of scholarly Reaganomics.

The myth of intrinsic merit is only one of the arguments in support of the practice of blind submission. But Fish makes a specious, even cynical leap. To dispense with the myth, as he does, is not therefore fully to undermine the basis for the practice. A stronger argument, which he doesn't address, is the political need of poor laborers like myself. And not only our political need but our indispensable value to the profession.

Just because intrinsic merit is a myth, and just because scholarly luminaries are in *some* sense more important than scholarly novices, is no reason to make the efforts of the lesser known more arduous. Debunking a myth is one thing—bravo!—but weakening the lower rungs of the academic ladder is another. Stanley Fish will get published, the profession will grow, and the examples he cites of important critics rejected under blind submission will be rare in any case.

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