INTRODUCTION

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A speaker rises and moves to the podium at the front of a large auditorium. As a hush falls over the audience, the speaker addresses three panelists seated at the table next to her: "You're taking a trip, a cruise in the South Pacific, and, to the passengers' dismay, the ship begins to tilt leeward. You aid in the escape. Lifeboats fill quickly and leave for the relative safety of open waters, where cargo ships will rescue those adrift at sea. Soon, however, you find yourself one of three remaining passengers standing on the sinking hull. There is only one vessel left, an inflatable raft that can support the weight of a single person; to attempt to fit more than one passenger into the raft would ensure the demise of all three."

The speaker turns to the audience: "The three remaining passengers happen to be professors at the University of Alabama at Birmingham." The audience erupts in laughter.

The speaker continues, "Let me introduce this year's participants in the Raft, a debate in which three UAB scholars must convince a crowd of colleagues and students that their academic discipline makes them, by association, worthy of being the sole survivor. Our panelists may praise their own disciplines, of course, but they may also criticize the others as well. Following the debate, the audience will determine each professor's fate with applause. The professor who garners the loudest applause wins the raft and floats to safety. The two who garner less applause go down with the ship."

In 1999, I was only the second English professor at UAB to compete in the Raft, which, by the way, I lost to a professor of public health. I remember saying that we didn't need hygiene

police nagging us to brush our teeth three times a day while we bobbed up and down on the waves; and I remember the public health professor saying that we didn't need grammar police correcting our screams for help. It was, of course, all in good fun. But it was also quite serious. Our students (English majors, public health majors) and our colleagues from all across the university were there, cheering or jeering us.

Participating in the Raft forced me to promote and defend English studies (to a hilariously hostile audience) in ways that I had never done before, and this experience (coupled with the fact that I *lost*) initiated a long process for me, a process of considering and attempting to articulate, in more and more concrete terms, the value of English studies within the context of a changing university and a changing world. The fact is, as John L. Kijinski points out, English studies "is not simply a 'natural' subject for university study that any humane person would endorse; it is, instead, a discipline that must work to define its aims clearly" (44). And we cannot argue for the value and aims of an academic enterprise if we are unable to articulate what that enterprise entails.[1]

Yet one of the primary obstacles facing twenty-first-century English studies, in both academic and public contexts, is its disciplinary opacity, its murky content, and its uncertain boundaries, which defy definition. In fact, since the day I lost the Raft, one question has continued to haunt me: *What exactly is English studies?* As I began to read different accounts of the rise (and sometimes fall) of English, I discovered, to my surprise, that adequate answers to this seemingly simple question are not only elusive but also fraught with conflict. In fact, many historians of English studies answer the question with a resounding, "I have no idea."

For some scholars, the disciplinary opacity, murkiness, and indefinable quality of English studies cause no discomfort at all. In fact, curricular incoherence is at times even heralded as one of English studies' strengths, or at least as something that should not concern us very much. In 1990 Peter Elbow, reflecting on his participation in the 1987 English Coalition Conference, was struck, above all, by the fact that English "cannot define what it is" (v). Yet Elbow suggests that this disciplinary uncertainty "is probably a good thing" (v). In a similar vein, Gerald Graff declares, "It seems doubtful to me that English is now, ever has been, or ever will be a coherently defined 'discipline,' but I do not find this troubling in the least" ("Is There" 11). These scholars view the very term *discipline* negatively, as a force that limits academic freedom, squelches scholarly creativity, and confines inquiry to a particular subject. And as a limiting and confining force, disciplinary status is something to be energetically avoided.

For other scholars, the disciplinary incoherence of English studies constitutes nothing less than a crisis, and these apocalyptic accounts of troubled times often take on a certain Chicken Little tone. James Berlin tells us, "English studies is in crisis. Indeed, virtually no feature of the discipline can be considered beyond dispute" (xi). To Berlin's drama, Terry Eagleton adds a touch of humor but makes a similar point: "[I]n a post-imperial, postmodernist culture, 'English,' which for some time now has been living on like a headless chicken, has proved to be an increasingly unworkable discourse" ("End" 8). Finally, Ian Small and Josephine Guy explain that "English departments have always contained within them the potential for crisis simply because there has always been dissent over the nature of the subject" (191); and Small and Guy give practitioners of English studies an ultimatum: "[E]ither English as a discipline will continue to exist in a state of crisis, *or* a dominant epistemology and therefore a dominant intellectual authority will begin to re-emerge" (194).[2]

My own position is a negotiation of crisis rhetoric and nonchalance. With Berlin and Eagleton, I am concerned about the way that disciplinary incoherence affects the entire project of English studies, both inside and outside the academy. However, it is also true that specialization, and its constant companion, incoherence, have been endemic to modern universities since their emergence in the late nineteenth century, and the push toward further specialization will surely not abate anytime soon. With Elbow and Graff, I do not see any good reason to declare that the sky is falling or that English studies is in crisis. For one thing, I believe that the problems English studies faces at the moment are, in fact, thoroughly solvable; and, in any case, if we want to fix an academic problem in a discipline that we care about, the very worst thing we can do is declare that discipline to be in crisis.[3]

One way to begin answering our seemingly simple question (What is English studies?) is to look at the historical development of English as a field and the intersections among the disciplines that it comprises: linguistics and discourse analysis, rhetoric and composition, creative writing, literature and literary criticism, critical theory and cultural studies, and English education. Kijinski points out that "a better understanding of the controversial beginnings of our own profession should give us an enlightened historical perspective on the current debate over the scope and aims of English studies which attracts so much attention today" (38). Historical perspective is a precious commodity, and, as Phyllis Franklin points out, English studies has only recently tried to find some.[4] I argue that we must know where we've been in order to understand where we are and to plan for a better future.

English Studies in Historical Context

The first schools in the West took shape in the fertile Athenian democracies of the fifth, fourth, and third centuries BCE. Plato's Academy and Aristotle's Lyceum, in particular, served as models of higher education for centuries to follow. In the Academy and the Lyceum, and in subsequent schools shaped after their example, knowledge was treated as an integrated system, and academic inquiry drew from whatever arts and sciences were most useful in solving the problem at hand (Charlton). Medieval education, based on the ancient model, was mainly tutorial in structure. The curriculum consisted of initial studies in the *trivium* (rhetoric, grammar, logic) and the *quadrivium* (arithmetic, astronomy, geometry, music), followed by more advanced studies in law, medicine, or religion (Moran 3–5). Students proceeded through the same curriculum, with each "class" taking all of their subjects together as a coherent group. These subjects were soon called "disciplines" because of their integration of academic and moral studies; the word *discipline*, then, had ethical overtones in its earliest academic uses.

Toward the end of the Middle Ages, certain subjects were extracted from the whole system of integrated knowledge, and some of the teachers (*magistri*) at these "ancient" universities began to concentrate their academic efforts more and more on specific disciplines. In this context, the study and practice of rhetoric held a privileged position over other disciplines, since knowledge is useless unless it can be communicated effectively, and literary and historical discourse served as examples for analysis and imitation. Rhetoric was the foundation of a liberal education.[5]

With the rise of Enlightenment rationalism during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, a dramatic shift occurred in the academic values and curricular structures associated with European higher education, and a result of this shift was the proliferation of new "modern" universities where knowledge was treated as thoroughly specialized and discipline-specific, not integrated.[6] Proponents of Enlightenment rationalism considered each discipline to have its own exclusive methods and objects of inquiry, and new disciplines were constantly emerging as new methodologies were developed in the various arts and sciences (Moran 6). Interestingly, the very first division of knowledge (or what the Germans called *Wissenschaft*) separated the natural sciences (*Naturwissenschaft*) from the arts and humanities (*Geisteswissenschaft*), relieving the sciences of moral and cultural responsibilities.

Administrators at these new modern universities established specialized academic "departments" that would produce new knowledge (rather than reproduce traditional knowledge) within the scope of their assigned methods and objects of inquiry, and with the explosion of disciplinary knowledge and the division of traditional disciplines into sub- and sub-subdisciplines, each with its own exclusive department, the curriculum turned from an integrated whole into a fragmented mess. With the proliferation of new disciplines specializing in narrow fields of inquiry, integrated knowledge and coherent curricula were quickly becoming archaic notions. As Robert J. Connors points out, the coherent curriculum of the ancient universities was converted into a system of requirements-plus-electives, with the number of requirements constantly falling in concert with the number of new disciplines that were exploding on the academic scene ("Overwork" 185–86). Each discipline in this new elective-based curriculum could

divide its courses into even more specialized subdisciplines, and each course could be split further into sections, keeping enrollments low and workloads reasonable, and preserving time for research, or the pursuit of new and original knowledge. Among European nations, Germany was leading the way in establishing these modern universities, where academic inquiry was specialized, original research was privileged, and overlap among disciplines was viewed as inefficient and a direct deterrent to intellectual progress.

Throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, American higher education was modeled largely after the "ancient" universities of Medieval Europe, offering an integrated liberal arts curriculum designed to prepare elite (and usually wealthy) students for community leadership roles. During the mid-nineteenth century, however, the U.S. government perceived a problem in higher education. The small liberal arts colleges that dotted the landscape did not consider the practical sciences and technology to be worthy subjects for a humanistic education, yet these were exactly the areas of knowledge and skill that the states needed to foster among their citizens in order to function as relatively independent units of a larger republic. This infrastructural need led the U.S. Congress to pass the Morrill Act of 1862, which established in every state one or more land-grant universities designed to train a new citizenry, tuition-free, for careers in agriculture, mining, and mechanical engineering. At these new "state" universities, the liberal arts were relegated to general education requirements, preprofessional preparation for more specialized, advanced, and technical curricula. By the 1880s, most European universities and the American universities established by the Morrill Act based their structures and values on the model of the German research university, where objective inquiry and scientific methods guided the establishment of distinctly nonhumanistic criteria for determining the worth of academic scholarship and teaching.

It is in this context of the new "modern" university in Europe and America that English studies emerged as a discipline. In *Professing Literature,* Graff explains that "Strictly speaking, there were no 'academic literary studies' in America or anywhere else until the formation of language and literature departments in the last quarter of the nineteenth century" (1). While there must have been an air of tremendous excitement over the rapid intellectual progress that was being made before the turn of the century, this was also, to be sure, a time of instability in academic inquiry as a whole. Small and Guy explain that "when English was constituted as an academic discipline in English universities in the late nineteenth century, there was a general crisis of intellectual authority in a large number of disciplines of knowledge, for the first time finding themselves in competition with each other as explanations of human affairs" (192). For many of these disciplines, debates eventually settled into coherent practices, but this was not to be the case for English studies.

In its earliest manifestations, attempting in part to distinguish itself from other more established disciplines like classics, "English" meant a mixture of things: the practice of oratory, the study of rhetoric and grammar, the composition of poetry, and the appreciation of literature, not just in the English language, but written in England by English authors. (American literature was a twentieth-century addition to the English studies curriculum.) W. Jackson Bate points out that "English departments, for good or ill, took into receivership a variety of subjects that other departments, becoming concerned more with methodology, began to neglect" (196). And Graff adds, "with [. . .] size and power came diversification. The colonizing of composition was just one instance of how the territorial ambitions that led English departments to widen their range of interests made it difficult to maintain a unitary definition of the discipline. English departments seem to be forever stretching their boundaries to absorb new functions and then wondering why their boundaries are so unclear ("Is There" 16). In the context of the new modern university, where disciplines were defined by clear methodological boundaries and exclusive objects of study, English studies' mixture of functions was not respected.

English studies had other problems as well. The first university-level departments of English lacked rigorous courses—they are described more as casual chat sessions than meaningful learning experiences—and the teachers who staffed them often wrote uneven scholarship using vague methodologies based on undefined aesthetic values. English was an undisciplined discipline,

and its reputation among the scientific departments that dominated the emerging modern universities was slipping fast. Interestingly, the humanistic impulse that gave rise to English studies did not hold sway for long.

During the nineteenth century, philology emerged out of the German research universities, and, in an effort to become a legitimate academic discipline, joined forces with English studies. Philology included, among other things, according to Geoffrey Sampson, "the investigation of the history of languages, the uncovering of their relationships, and the reconstruction of the lost 'proto-languages' from which families of extant languages descend" (13). Philology was, in part, the distinctly historical or diachronic study of language as it changed over time (an aspect of philology that, following WWI, became known as comparative linguistics), but it also had a clearly cultural dimension. Julie Tetel Andresen says that philology also "viewed language as a means to study the literature and culture of a people" (134). Modern languages evolved differently out of the first protolanguages, and philologists believed that national cultures accounted for many of the linguistic divergences that led eventually to distinct modern languages. In American philology, Andresen tells us, "there was an inalienable association of language and nation" (32). Within English studies in the late nineteenth century, literary texts were viewed by philologists as examples of historically evolving languages in specific cultural contexts; Andresen describes this interest as "the literary orientation of traditional philology" (40). Literature worked very well as an object of analysis for philologists.

The first philologists, trained in German research universities and embarrassed by their "undisciplined" colleagues, turned English broadly speaking into the *science* of language and literary studies, bringing historical fact finding, empirical linguistic methodologies, and Enlightenment rational inquiry to bear on imaginative texts. It became the "mission" of these early philologists, in both Europe and the United States, Graff tells us, "to turn English and other modern languages into a rigorous academic subject" ("Is There" 15). Further, it was the philologists who defined the structure of English studies: their interest in national languages and literatures accounts for the emphasis in twenty-first-century English departments on the separation of British and American literature, and their interest in historical language shifts accounts for the classification of these national literatures into distinct periods.

Yet even as the philologists came to dominate early departments of English, the humanists, or “literary critics” (as opposed to “language scientists”), who had been largely responsible for initiating English studies in the modern university, refused to fade into the background. As Graff explains, there remained a group of “generalists” in English studies who were committed to “the old college ideal of liberal or general culture against that of narrowly specialized research,” and this group “defended appreciation over investigation and values over facts” (*Professing* 55). It was among this group of generalists (and in opposition to technical philology) that creative writing first emerged as a way to link literary appreciation with literary production, enhancing students’ overall experience with imaginative texts. Graff points out that “[t]he union of Arnoldian humanism and scientific research which gave birth to academic literary studies was never free from strain” (*Professing* 3), and that, because of this constant conflict (which, by the way, persists in many universities even today), “early efforts to unify English as a discipline were frustrated” (“Is There” 16).

The split between the humanist critics and the language scientists was not the only one that created tensions in these early English departments. Graff writes, “Another rift opened when English departments by the turn of the century became responsible in most universities for freshman writing courses” (“Is There” 16). Connors points out in “Overwork/Underpay” that during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, a “literacy crisis” (caused by loose admissions policies resulting from the Morrill Act) led to the *requirement* of first-year composition (183). Rhetoric, no longer viewed among students as the foundation of integrated knowledge, quickly became little more than an obstacle they would have to negotiate before moving on to more interesting electives and more relevant courses in their major departments.

Further, while other disciplines were dividing their courses into subspecialties and multiple sections, required first-year composition was still taught to an entire entering class—*en masse* (Connors, “Overwork” 185–88). With the shift in interest from oral to written media, and a corresponding shift from group to individual attention to students, rhetoric professors, once the most respected members of the academic community, became overworked and underappreciated, reading hundreds, sometimes thousands, of student essays every term—to the envy of absolutely no one (181–85). The image of the rhetoric professor hunched over a stack of student essays was hardly appealing to the youngest intelligentsia in English studies, who, seeking careers in the discipline, would do anything to avoid that fate, focusing instead on literary studies where the class sizes were comparatively small (188–92). Required composition was, by the turn of the century, so dreaded that it was relegated almost entirely to the ranks of graduate teaching assistants and part-time non-tenure-track instructors (192–95), further damaging the subject’s academic reputation and creating a marginalized workforce that remains in place today. Once regarded as a central discipline in liberal education, rhetoric soon became a shallow collection of exercises and assignments with little concern for or reflection upon what unifies those assignments and what makes those exercises worthwhile; the once-respected discipline of rhetoric had become un-disciplined.

The two simultaneous processes of expansion and specialization had unfortunate consequences. As Maureen Daly Goggin explains, “In claiming separate intellectual and material spaces via constructing distinct and competing identities, the early threads connecting the various factions [making up English studies]—literary studies, speech communication, linguistics, rhetoric/composition, and creative writing—were severed” (65). But while English studies appeared on the surface to be a mixture of unrelated interests and enterprises, it was, nevertheless, philology that held institutional power, legitimated as the science of language in a university system that valued science more than anything else. Early in the new century, in fact, English studies, in both Europe and America, was almost exclusively equated with philology.

If literary studies, by way of philology, had—for the most part, at least—become a science, and the other enterprises housed in English departments were not scientific, then what *were* those other enterprises? Two journals, *English Studies* (published in the Netherlands since 1919) and *Review of English Studies* (published in England since 1925), continue to this day to publish scholarship based in the science of philology, and, in their early years, they clearly distinguished between "scientific" disciplines and "practical" disciplines. In "A Guide to English Studies," published in Volume 7 (1925) of *English Studies,* the journal's coeditor, E. Kruisinga, wrote that the field of English studies is best described as philology, and "philology suggests the study of language on its *scientific* or at least *non-practical* side" (1, my emphasis). Thus, even in the very first journals to publish (and thereby legitimate) research in the emerging discipline of English studies, theory was privileged over practice, knowledge over application, and mind over body. So much for *using* what you know; so much for oratory, literary criticism, composition, and creative writing (cultural studies didn't exist at the time, but it wouldn't have made the cut either).

Particularly in American higher education, as philology-based literary studies increased in prestige with the other sciences, what were perceived as "practical" and therefore (by definition) less rigorous academic endeavors received less attention and less funding from university administrators, ultimately forcing these endeavors to either secede and form separate departments (oratory seceded from English and became communication studies) or remain under the umbrella of scientific literary studies and accept marginal status (composition, for example).

John Dewey, turn-of-the-century philosopher and educator, deplored these oppositions that favored the life of the mind over life in the world. In his 1901 treatise *The Educational Situation,* Dewey writes,

> He who upholds the banner of discipline in classics or mathematics, when it comes to the training of a man for the profession of a teacher or investigator, will often be found to condemn a school of commerce, or technology, or even of medicine, in the university on the ground that it is too professional in character—that it smacks of the utilitarian and commercial. The kind of discipline which enables a man to pursue one vocation is lauded; the kind of training that fits him for another is condemned. Why this invidious distinction? (308)

Although Dewey still saw a clear *separation* between theory and practice in American universities at the turn of the century, he nevertheless believed that, by 1901, the debates surrounding theory/practice had lost their vitriolic tone. There were no longer heated arguments about value; the two interests simply ignored each other. Indeed, according to Dewey, maintaining the theory/practice distinction as an antagonism was tantamount to maintaining old-school elitism, which was simply no longer possible in the turn-of-the-century American democratic milieu (309).[7]

For Dewey, the political structure of American democracy itself was motivation enough to destroy the oppositions that divided people into intellectual versus working classes, and the institution that was poised and ready to enact this destruction (if it chose to take on the task) was, of course, the newly formed modern university. Dewey writes,

> All this, I say frankly and emphatically, I regard as a survival from a dualistic past—from a society which was dualistic politically, drawing fixed lines between classes, and dualistic intellectually, with its rigid separation between the things of matter and of mind—between the affairs of the world and of the spirit. Social democracy means an abandonment of this dualism. It means a common heritage, a common work, a common destiny. It is flat hostility to the ethics of modern life to suppose that there are two different aims of life located on different planes; that the few who are educated are to live on a plane of exclusive and isolated culture, while the many toil below on the level of practical endeavor directed at material commodity. The problem of our modern life is precisely to do away with all the barriers that keep up this division. If the university cannot accommodate itself to this movement, so much the worse for it. Nay, more; it is doomed to helpless failure unless it does more than accommodate itself; unless it becomes one of the chief agencies for bridging the gap, and bringing about an effective interaction of all callings in society [. . .]. To decline to recognize this intimate connection of professions in modern life with the discipline and culture that come from the pursuit of truth for its own sake, is to be at least one century behind the times. (310)

Now, over a century on from Dewey's 1901 *The Educational Situation,* those who continue to cling to the old theory/practice, mind/body, and education/training dichotomies are at least two centuries behind the times. Theory and practice are interdependent, Dewey argued: knowledge that is not reinforced by experience is empty, and experience that is not reinforced by critical reflection is blind.

One reason Dewey was so concerned with destroying these insidious oppositions is that he believed "pedagogy," or the art and science of teaching, should be a university course. But pedagogy was viewed as pragmatic, and was thus firmly marginalized in the value structure of the turn-of-the-century research university. In "Pedagogy as a University Discipline," originally published in 1898, Dewey makes a convincing argument (perhaps the first of its kind) for offering education as an academic subject at the university level. Dewey explains that the normal schools, where the bulk of teacher training took place, rarely prepared students in the rigors of subject knowledge; and those students who graduated from universities and decided to teach were well versed in subject knowledge, but had no skills in or knowledge of the craft of teaching. If universities could take responsibility for teaching pedagogy as an academic subject, the quality of education at all levels would dramatically improve. The success of Dewey's argument, he believed, ultimately rested on the dissolution of the distinction between knowledge and praxis.

So convinced was Dewey of the insidiousness of the theory/practice dichotomy that he ends *The Educational Situation* with a confident claim and an unwavering prediction: "The fact is sure," Dewey writes, "that the intellectual and moral lines which divide the university courses in science and letters from those of professional schools are gradually getting obscure and are bound finally to fade away" (311). Yet, despite Dewey's confident tone, his prediction did not play out. In certain disciplines, English not the least among them, the "intellectual and moral lines"—between theory and practice, education and training, and mind and body—intensified unabated throughout the first half of the twentieth century, even when the class-based assumptions that served as their foundation had been forgotten, or at least suppressed. The vitriolic tone of the debates had returned with a vengeance, especially in English studies, with conflicts among literature and composition and English education, linguistics and literary criticism, critical theory and creative writing occurring with too much

regularity. Dewey's dream of interdependence had, in English studies at least, turned into a nightmare of divisiveness. With this divisiveness came an equal interest in disciplinary secession from English.

The first battle in English studies, between literary criticism and language science, had already been fought and won by the philologists. And while there was continued tension between these groups throughout the late nineteenth century, philology's most vexing rival around 1900 turned out to be its own disciplinary sibling, linguistics. Linguistics emerged in Europe as the ahistorical (or synchronic) study of language as a coherently structured system, and the object of inquiry for linguistics was naturally occurring spoken language. Sampson describes "synchronic linguistics" as "the analysis of languages as communicative systems as they exist at a given point in time (often the present), ignoring (as their speakers ignore) the route by which they arrived at their present form" (13). While the early philologists were clearly interested in written (especially literary) texts, the new linguists argued that speech is prior to writing and is also, therefore, primary in importance. Since literature is not spoken and does not represent a person's natural capacity to produce intelligible language (and thus cannot represent the system of rules for constructing that language), linguists did not turn to imaginary texts as objects of analysis. If they did, it was in the very limited capacity of data gathering and stylistics. Roger Fowler admits that although linguistics "may be a means of assuring a sound factual basis for many sorts of critical judgment," it does not "provide ways of unfolding and discussing precise textual effects" (28); and G. N. Leech confesses, "the most interesting and illuminating aspect of communication in literature is beyond the scope of linguistics" (155–56).

Not only did "synchronic" linguists study oral language instead of written language, but some of them also began to take a rather negative view of written *literary* language, perhaps in direct response to the common attitude among their colleagues that "modern linguistic theory [is] a contributory discipline to literary criticism" (Freeman 3). Fowler points out that the valorization of speech over writing contributes to linguistics' incompatibility with literary studies: "[T]his attitude leads to an implied denigration of written language, to a view of particular literary forms as modifications of 'normal usage'" (4), and, accordingly, Leech (a linguist) defines literature as "the use of unorthodox or deviant forms of language" (135).

In a strange twist of fate, it was actually philology (literary history and culture), not linguistics (language structure and grammar), that seceded from English departments during the first half of the twentieth century. Andresen explains that the founding in 1902 of the American Anthropological Association began a steady process by which philologists recognized more affinities with the empirical and cultural work of anthropology than with the literary criticism and universal values expounded by their colleagues in English.[8]

Soon another event would complicate the evolving tension between philology and the rest of English studies. As the United States and England entered World War I, they found themselves fighting the very nation that had brought scientific methodologies to literary studies: Germany. Eagleton writes, "One of the most strenuous antagonists of English—philology—was closely bound up with Germanic influence; and since England [and the United States] happened to be passing through a major war with Germany, it was possible to smear classical philology as a form of ponderous Teutonic nonsense" (*Literary* 26). Andresen agrees, arguing that "World War I (1914–1918) could justifiably be identified as a turning point. American reaction against Germany during the war freed American linguists to work on non-Indo-European languages" (207), resulting in a "slightly pugnacious attitude of post–World War I American linguists toward their European counterparts" (208).

Although linguistics had, for the most part, come to dominate philology by the first quarter of the twentieth century, the secession of philology to anthropology left structural linguists (who did not secede, at least not yet) in an uncomfortable alliance that was clearly more a matter of convenience than common interest; these linguists were the lone language scientists in a department whose humanists seemed to be gaining strength. Many of the philologists who remained in English departments after the general split became viewed as arcane historians, turning once dominant faculty members into a merely tolerated old guard.[9] In 1924, the Linguistics Society of America was established in order to give linguistics credibility as a discipline in its own right. Some synchronic linguists formed their own departments as well, leaving a number of English departments across the country with no linguists at all.

With the fall (and secession) of philology came renewed interest in literary criticism and composition, and creative writing played a role (albeit a failed one) in this renewal. First, creative writing emerged during the decades after the turn of the century, according to D. G. Myers, "as a means for unifying the two main functions of English departments—the teaching of writing and the teaching of literature." As Myers points out, however, "creative writing failed to achieve its goals," and English departments continued their divisive ways (xiv). Second, literary critics, enjoying their newfound freedom from the domination of philology, used creative writing as a way to "reform and redefine the academic study of literature, establishing a means for approaching it 'creatively'; that is, by some other means than it had been approached before that time, which was historically and linguistically." Creative writing, then, became an "institutional arrangement for treating literature as if it were a continuous experience and not a mere corpus of knowledge" (4); and it was a way for literary studies to provide students with a total experience of the intersection of literary analysis and production (4–5). As we will see, creative writing also did not achieve this second goal.

While the philologists, linguists, and literary critics (with the help of creative writing) were vying for dominance, yet another tension had been emerging in English studies. Speech communication, which was once combined with composition in a powerful alliance, no longer desired to be associated with this service discipline. Further, linguists, the only other members of English departments who were interested in oral communication, considered themselves to be scientists; but speech communication was an art, not a science. In 1914, the National Association of Academic Teachers of Public Speaking was formed and those interested in the pragmatic art of oral communication broke from English to establish departments of speech communication, leaving structuralist linguists with few colleagues interested in oral language and leaving beleaguered composition specialists with few colleagues interested in the rhetorical tradition.[10]

The split between speech communication and English was a rich context for, but not a direct cause of, literary criticism's rise to power. In fact, World War I had a much more direct effect on this transition. I have already mentioned that World War I created a distaste among British and American scholars for anything German, including philology. But in addition to this directly anti-German sentiment, the devastation that the war caused in England dramatically increased feelings of patriotism and created a "spiritual hungering" to which, Eagleton suggests, "poetry seemed to provide an answer" (*Literary* 26). Although there was no material devastation in the United States, Americans also, nevertheless, experienced an increased sense of national pride, which accounted for the legitimation of American literature as an academic subject. It was largely, then, the *social* influence of World War I that caused a welling-up of national pride, and this burgeoning patriotism created a new desire among students to read the literature that represented their nation's values and greatness. University administrators and literary critics were quick to capitalize on the newfound cachet of imaginative literature. But, while English departments had a new interest (literature itself, rather than the scientific method of analyzing it) as their central concern, the discontentment and frustrations among English studies' other disciplines (linguistics, composition, creative writing, and the emerging discipline of English education) were reaching their zenith.

The divisiveness that characterized "factions" within English departments as midcentury approached was not to be soothed by historical developments to come. Quite the opposite. Not only were some of the disciplines within English already marginalized (at least partly) for their inherently "pragmatic" orientation, literary studies itself, while on the privileged side of the theory/practice dichotomy still being maintained at most universities, at least until the 1940s, was to face new challenges. In the aftermath of World War II, the U.S. government turned its interests (and financial support) squarely in the direction of national defense, which required an equal shift in education toward science

and technology. During this time, government grants encouraged research in the disciplines that could produce advanced weapons and develop a space program, and the Soviet launch of Sputnik in 1957 only accelerated these changes in higher education. Further, the universities where this research was being conducted often had to match federal funds or construct new facilities and hire additional personnel for these scientific endeavors. Thus, not only were the humanities and English not able to access large federal grants (slated, as they were, for science and technology), but many of these grants also drained university funds that would have otherwise gone to humanities disciplines (ACLS 6). The 1950s and 1960s, then, saw a more radical devaluation of English studies than any other age in American history, and this devaluation was a direct result of government intervention.

With humanities education rapidly declining in importance (again), and with the disciplines associated with science and technology reaching nearly superhero status in the academy, it was no longer sufficient to declare that English (or at least its dominant discipline, literature) was theoretical, not practical, that it was instruction in the best that has been thought and said, not training in workaday technology. The values associated with these oppositions (theory/practice, education/training, mind/body) had flipped on their heads. Graham Hough, writing in 1964, offers a sarcastic summary of the problem: "[T]he humanities do not make anything explode or travel faster, and the powers that be at present are not much interested in anything else" (96).[11] English could no longer rest on its laurels, assured that the humanities would always hold a privileged position in the modern university and that the practical disciplines, in the event of a real crisis, would be the first to go. Still, no one could have imagined that, in time, the humanities as a whole would come under fire.

What kept English going during these lean years? Not a resurgence of interest in literature; not a new way of reading old texts. Instead, it was English studies' old "sore subject" (Ohmann, *English* 132), required first-year composition. Most historians of English studies, in fact, acknowledge that without composition the study of literature as we know it simply would not exist (Applebee; Berlin; Graff, *Professing*; Parker). Graff writes, "Without that enterprise [i.e., composition] the teaching of literature could never have achieved its central status" (*Professing* 2), and "though the grading of freshman themes was often scorned as an activity beneath the dignity of an English professor, it was the English department's control over required composition courses that enabled it to grow into the largest and most powerful department in the humanities" ("Is There" 16). Required first-year composition courses paid the bills because most universities distribute at least part of their budgets according to credit-hour production. Since these composition courses were general education requirements, since most of the courses were taught by part-time non-tenure-track instructors, and since the full-fledged discipline that we know today as rhetoric and composition studies did not yet exist, English departments, wealthy among humanities disciplines, could run low-enrollment literature courses without the administrative threat of cutting back or eliminating low-productivity literature programs. This windfall for literary studies would end (or should have ended) during the late twentieth century with the evolving professionalization of composition studies and its emergence as a full academic discipline in its own right.

With the general shift in education from theory to practice, linguistics, composition, creative writing, and English education had an opportunity to (re)assert themselves as pragmatic arts, as means to communicate effectively in a troubled social context. But no such (re)assertion emerged, partly because English studies was so strongly associated then with literature, because the humanities in general were being devalued, and because science ruled with an iron fist.

English education, in particular, was hit hard by the pervasive influence of scientific paradigms that were infiltrating every nook and cranny of university life. Dewey had gotten his wish; education was, by early- to midcentury, an academic discipline in its own right at most universities. But if English is one discipline and education is another, what did that make English education? Early English education was, in the words of George H. Henry, "an 'odd' discipline," a "hybrid—one very large area called 'education' apparently to be 'grafted' upon another even larger one called 'English'" (4). This "odd" discipline would, however, experience a period of rejuvenation during the 1960s, when teachers and administrators alike were enthusiastic about expanding the curriculum in new and interesting directions and developing pedagogical methods that were specific to English and not necessarily relevant to the entire scope of education. At this time, what English education lacked in theoretical coherence it certainly made up for in energy.

But the energy and enthusiasm of the 1960s would be crushed during the 1970s. Advancement in science and technology required a literate workforce, and English education was in the business of literacy. There was, however, a simultaneous push toward "accountability," the "scientific" demonstration through statistical measures of the success of education generally. Observable behavioral objectives became the criteria by which educators would determine the success or failure of their students as well as of their own teaching methods (Henry 7–11). By 1973, Ben Nelms explains,

> our professional landscape had changed drastically. *Accountability* was the new watchword. The back-to-the-basics movement was in full swing. Budgets were cut; federal dollars for English practically disappeared [. . .]; public criticism of our profession became more shrill [. . .]; and our professional posture became more and more defensive [. . .]. This sensed loss of professional autonomy and the tension between public mandates and the shared professional vision that had emerged in the late 1960s became acute in the mid 1970s. (185)

The 1970s was the era of national and state-mandated competency testing, and the schools that tested low were threatened with government takeover. English education was deeply implicated, since the teachers of the 1960s could not "demonstrate" statistically their students' newfound sense of self-worth and sensitivity toward others. Nelms writes, "the minimum-competency movement would foster the teaching of isolated skills rather than conceptual wholes, teaching for the test rather than for growth, and an emphasis on actuality rather than possibility" (190). Further, state-mandated curricula, Gordon M. Pradl explains, left "far too many teachers and learners [. . .] trapped in conditions that seek to *control* their lives through external management rather than *transform* them through collaborative partnership" (217).

During these troubled times, every humanities discipline, including literary studies, would have to adapt to its new context. For a few decades, literary scholars had been developing and practicing what we now know as the New Criticism, a kind of literary scholarship that abandoned subjective humanism (particularly Romanticism) in favor of more objective and disinterested critical values. Although New Critics turned their attention mostly to poetic language as a reaction against what they perceived as the mechanistic language of scientific positivism, it remains true that objective and disinterested methods of inquiry (in direct contradistinction to Romantic subjectivist methods) were simultaneously being promoted in science and technology. But New Criticism, or the objective and disinterested practice of examining tropes and figures, ironic paradoxes, and tripartite structures (among other things) through close readings of poetic texts, could not save English studies from imminent decline. New Criticism was certainly useful in the years following the 1944 GI Bill, which entitled throngs of new students, who previously would not have attended college, to cheap student loans and a full undergraduate education. New Criticism could be learned and practiced by almost anyone: possession of elitist values and a detailed understanding of European history were no longer prerequisites to the meaningful study of literature. In fact, because it is so amenable to pedagogical adaptation, New Criticism is still prevalent in many English classrooms across the country.

Following World War II, while the New Critics and other literary scholars turned toward objective and disinterested values, a rift opened between literary critics and creative writers. Whereas early creative writing classes were taught by literary critics whose primary goal was to enhance students' total literary experience, the new creative writing classes were increasingly being taught by actual writers, not critics. Creative *writers,* not interested in "close reading," which they believed destroyed the aesthetic experience, maintained ties to romantic notions of creativity and emotion, opening a seemingly unbridgeable gulf between critics and writers. Differences soon turned to politics. Myers writes, "In the hallways of the English department, exchanges between poets and scholars are marked by mutual hostility. The poets complain that literary study has 'no point of contact with the concerns of most working poets'; the scholars dismiss creative writing as 'pseudo-literature'" (4–5; also see Scholes 5–7).

But, objective and disinterested though it may have appeared, the fact is that New Criticism detached itself from any relevance outside of the academy by locating meaning entirely within the confines of the text: rigorous, perhaps, but socially and politically irrelevant. Literary criticism, by the end of the 1950s, had transformed itself right into a tight corner. Mimicking the sciences, which were already well established and basking in prestige, English had become overly unified, dominated by a single discipline and a single approach, and this approach took no account of the trouble that was brewing outside the hallowed halls of the ivory tower.[12] The social revolutions of the 1960s were affecting every facet of life in America, and the academy seemed to be blindsided by the social transformations that were breaching its unstable ramparts.

With the demise of New Criticism and the impending transformations that would come during the 1960s, English studies had another prime chance to redeem itself from many of its past failures. Disciplines associated with the sciences and technology had been one up on New Criticism because they were directly concerned with developments outside of academia—they were "relevant." This extra-academic concern on the part of science and technology was viewed positively until the 1960s; but now students and citizens alike began to realize that if the world ends it will be at the hands of scientists and technicians. Nuclear physics, for example, once heralded as offering a potential solution to the American energy crisis, was now deplored as the potential destruction of the human race.

During the especially formative later years of the 1960s, the so-called literary canon (a term with Biblical overtones) was called into question, filled, as it was, with "dead white males," and the greatest challenges to this tradition grew out of theoretical approaches that took root in the early women's rights movement, adult education, the civil rights movement, and a general distaste for authority. Many of these theories (feminism, cultural studies, multiculturalism, and deconstruction, among others) that were now being applied to literary texts had developed and matured in the grassroots efforts of social activists, outside the context of literary criticism. English was rapidly expanding its methodological scope in certain much-needed directions.

What came out of this critical period, however, was a frustrating mixture of successes and failures. While it is true that English studies was beginning to abandon the methodologies that did not take account of the world outside of academia, it is also true that English studies did not apply its newly developed "social" methodologies to texts beyond imaginative literature. Thus, although certain methodological problems had been remedied, the application exclusively to literature of these more socially relevant critical methodologies retained for English studies a kind of elitism that would, again, hardly endear the discipline to students, administrators, and citizens outside of the academy. We were ridiculed in the popular press (at times justifiably) for our elitist discourses, and with no application to texts or contexts outside of the academy, these discourses did in fact develop in some extreme directions. Continuing the legacy of senseless specialization, there came a point in the 1980s where critics of different orientations were no longer able to converse easily, and some, deploring this new incoherence in literary studies, declared another crisis—a crisis in criticism (Cain; Levin).

While the so-called crisis in criticism was declared mostly on the grounds of literary theory's incoherence, this new problem also offered easily gathered kindling for conservative flames. Roger Kimball, for example, argues that the radical students who had challenged the most virtuous ideals of higher education during the 1960s had become "tenured radicals," and Stanley Aronowitz and Henry Giroux admit that "the attack on the liberal arts gained momentum in part because its various fields had become havens for a new radical professoriate" (175). Allan Bloom and Dinesh D'Souza have been outspoken critics of contemporary literary theory, arguing that the relativism inherent in multiculturalism, with its attending assault on truth, has destroyed American culture and education. Echoing Bloom and D'Souza, Lynne Cheney, who has a PhD in English and served as chair of the National Endowment for the Humanities from 1986 through 1992, argues in *Telling the Truth* that academic scholarship in the humanities and English studies has lost its foundation in truth,

the pursuit of universal knowledge and transcendent values; and scholarship has lost this foundation because academics have become interested in pursuing radical political projects that benefit particular groups rather than pursuing objective knowledge that benefits humankind. Some of the culprits Cheney cites (and critiques) include feminism, cultural studies, Afrocentrism, deconstruction, multiculturalism, psychoanalysis, Marxism, discourse theory, postmodernism, media studies, poststructuralism, critical pedagogy, social constructionism, critical legal studies, relativism, political correctness—and wicca.

Adding to the problem of hyperspecialization in literary studies was the rapid emergence of disciplines that had once been suppressed in the administrative structure of most English departments. Throughout the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, a new generation of American scholars emerged; this group, disillusioned by the failure of humanistic values to save the world (and one war after another seemed to be a constant reminder of this failure), became interested in educating emerging middle-class students in the long-marginalized practical arts of linguistics, composition, English education, and creative writing. Connors explains that the rapid emergence of these disciplines grew "out of a great change in the American professoriate, especially in English, after World War II" ("Writing" 205). Connors continues,

> Before that time, college had tended to be for an elite social class and the professors there had been an elect group. After the war, however, the GI Bill made education loans easy for servicemen to get, and a great rush of veterans into colleges and universities resulted. [. . .] And from this mass of GI Bill students came a generation of graduate students and young faculty members who changed the face of English. These younger men [and women], who were from all American social classes, brought fresh ideas with them, many of which democratized the staid old English field. In literature they championed American literature and the New Criticism; their teaching changed textual analyses from something only a trained philologist could do to something any earnest student was capable of. In composition their populist influence was even more powerful. Young professors had always been forced to teach composition, and most of them had gritted their teeth, served their time, and escaped to literature as soon as possible. A notable group within this post–World War II genera-

> tion, however, determined to study composition, analyze it, and try to do it as best it could be done. (205)

This new generation of composition professors began the difficult and invigorating work of reconnecting writing studies with its original disciplinary foundation—rhetoric—a foundation that had been missing from composition studies since the secession of speech communication in 1914. As Janice Lauer points out, a renewed attention to rhetoric meant a renewed attention to important topics like invention, audience, structure, style, voice, and discourse; and throughout the late 1960s and 1970s, these issues permeated scholarship in rhetoric and composition's leading journals, including *College Composition and Communication* and the *Rhetoric Society Newsletter* (later renamed the *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*). With rhetoric as its renewed foundation, composition studies quickly emerged as a credible academic subject in its own right, and English studies began to create institutional space for it. By the end of the 1970s, no fewer than fifteen new PhD programs in rhetoric and composition had emerged, and their graduates were devoted almost exclusively to teaching the composing process, administering writing programs, studying the history and theory of rhetoric, and exploring rhetoric's contemporary applications (Lauer).

Further, during the late 1970s and 1980s, the new populist and democratic impulses that had taken hold of rhetoric and composition had also begun to emerge more vigorously in literary studies, where many of those who were newly versed in the discourses of critical theory and cultural studies adopted the stance toward students and teaching known as critical pedagogy. Critical pedagogy, in its heyday during the 1980s and 1990s, seemed to be a common language that many in English studies wanted to speak, despite whatever disputes there were among its constituent disciplines. Thus, in its most useful manifestations, critical pedagogy drew actively upon the strengths of linguistics and discourse analysis, rhetoric and composition, creative writing, literature and literary criticism, critical theory and cultural studies, and English education to accomplish a unified purpose, to teach working-class students how to critique the dominant power formations (institutions like school and work, for example) that were the source of their oppression. After a long and fruitful courtship, the love affair between English and critical pedagogy began to fade at the turn of the twenty-first century. Critical pedagogy was ultimately too limited in scope, and its political project was not always shared by everyone, including some progressive practitioners of the discipline. Feminists, for example, were at times put off by critical pedagogy's Marxist influence, which, they argued, reduced all social conflict to issues of class and ignored important issues that were actually more specific to gender.

Nevertheless, this new generation of American scholars, still delighted by the energetic eclecticism that was emerging in their departments and in the discipline, encouraged a shift in terminology from "English" to "English *studies*" (the plural stud*ies* modifying the singular English of previous decades), thus representing in name the plurality of the discipline at the end of the twentieth century.[13] One of the primary goals of *English Studies: An Introduction to the Discipline(s)* is to seek and describe a language (more *common* than the discourse of critical pedagogy) through which all of the disciplines comprised by English studies can speak to one another with less descent into divisiveness and greater reference to common purpose.

The Problem of Specialization

The history of English studies is a history of academic specialization. It is important to recognize, however, that the process of specialization was, from the very inception of the discipline, not only endemic to institutions of higher learning; it was a fact of life in culture generally. John Higham explains, "Initially, disciplinary specialization ran counter to American ideals; there was no place for a Renaissance man or woman in the newly de(com)partmentalized university. Soon after the turn of the century, however, specialization became more and more accepted as a way to advance knowledge beyond a kind of general application" (4). Even Dewey, writing in the thick of things at the turn of the century, recognized that specialization was not just an academic phenomenon:

> The problem of the multiplication of studies, of the consequent congestion of the curriculum, and the conflict of various studies for a recognized place in the curriculum; the fact that one cannot get in without crowding something else out; the effort to arrange a compromise in various courses of study by throwing the entire burden of election upon the student so that he shall make out his own course of study—this problem is only a reflex of the lack of unity in the social activities themselves, and of the necessity of reaching more harmony, more system in our scheme of life. This multiplication of study is not primarily a product of the schools. The last hundred years has created a new world, has revealed a new universe, material and social. The educational problem is not a result of anything within our own conscious wish or intention, but of the conditions in the contemporary world. (*Educational* 303)

The shift from preindustrial to industrial economies, and the specialization that came with industrialization, created a parallel shift in academic culture. Joe Moran points out that the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were marked by the emergence of a "new society" in which "the division of labor within an increasingly professionalized bureaucracy" created specialized corporate positions that, in turn, required more and more specialized treatment in academic institutions (13). Specialization, as a general cultural phenomenon, not *just* an academic one, was inevitable, and it has had a number of consequences, many of them negative.[14]

In "The Division, Integration, and Transfer of Knowledge," David Easton argues, "With increasing acceleration in the twentieth century, the social sciences and the humanities began to specialize with a vengeance so that today the basic disciplines have not only clearly identified themselves, but have subdivided internally into many subfields; and often, even within these, specialization continues apace" (11). This statement is more accurate in relation to English studies than it is to any other discipline in the humanities and social sciences.[15] In order to illustrate the difficulties that specialization has caused certain academic disciplines, Easton describes what he calls "the Humpty Dumpty problem":

> To understand the world it has seemed necessary to analyze it by breaking it into many pieces—the disciplines and their own divisions—in much the way that Humpty Dumpty, now the egg of knowledge, fragmented when he fell off the wall. But to act in the world, to try to address the issues for which the understanding of highly specialized knowledge was presumably sought, we need somehow to reassemble all the pieces. Here is the rub. Try as we may, we have been no more able than all of the king's horses and all of the king's men to put our knowledge together again for coping with the whole real problems of the world. (12–13)

Perhaps it is not a coincidence that the poem about Humpty Dumpty first appeared during the 1880s, the same period in which specialization and fragmentation were transforming public and academic culture irretrievably. But Easton's fairy tale is not as grim as the nineteenth-century version. He continues,

> Recognition of the Humpty Dumpty problem created by the high degree of specialization does not, of course, deny the importance of disciplinary knowledge. The disciplines are invaluable, and undoubtedly inescapable, in that they develop precise skills, concepts, and theories that improve our understanding of various aspects of the world. They provide a solid departure point for linkages to other areas of inquiry. But for the most part they do not do a good job of preparing the way for the application of this knowledge. (22)

While specialization has advanced our knowledge in all of the disciplines that make up English studies, the fact is that specialization has also caused several interrelated problems.

The first problem is related to the English studies curriculum. Most English departments structure their course offerings and major requirements according to the "coverage model," which has been with English studies since its inception in the late nineteenth century. The coverage model suggests that students, in order to be fully educated, need to demonstrate familiarity with the whole spectrum of literature, from the major periods to the three genres to certain influential authors.[16]

Once the curriculum was divided up into periods, genres, and authors, and these divisions became part of the literary subconscious (institutionalized realities that are beyond question, as they have become today), the need arose to house experts for each specialized area in which courses were offered. Each of these specialties in English studies has, during the past century, come to conceive of itself as a *discipline* in its own right, with a mutually exclusive scope and unique methods of inquiry. "Thus," Bate explains, "in literature, you confine your area, to begin with, to one author, a group of authors, or one aspect or genre of a period of a half century. And you ask *only* certain kinds of questions—those you have been hearing about or those most capable of systematization, leaving aside the larger difficulties and uncertainties of the subject" (201). What disciplinary status means is that specialists in a certain period, genre, or author, for example, *practice their discipline differently* from other specialists, even within literary studies. Thus, not only do the different specialists study different literary texts (appropriate to their period, genre, or author), but the very means of *producing* knowledge are different among specialists as well—they ask different questions, use different critical methodologies, and publish their research in different specialized forums, among other things.[17] Easton contends that as of the late twentieth century, "there is little place [in humanities education] for the generalist" (23), and this is especially true for English studies, the most specialized of all humanities disciplines. When a department loses a Victorian prose specialist or a Miltonist, that vacancy must be filled with another Victorian prose specialist or Miltonist, since shifting periods or genres means more (under the present system of disciplinarity) than just shifting objects of study.

In my own department, out of twenty-three tenured or tenure-line faculty members, nineteen wrote PhD dissertations in literature (either British or American), two wrote dissertations in rhetoric and composition, one wrote a dissertation in linguistics, and one wrote a creative thesis for an MFA. To say the least, this unbalanced structure causes logistical problems, as in cases of tenure and promotion. For example, scholarship in English education and rhetoric and composition is often "pedagogical." While pedagogical scholarship is highly valued in the disciplinary structures of English education and rhetoric and composition, in the context of tenure criteria based on literary studies, it is worth less than theoretical criticism. Critical theory and cultural studies evolved mostly external to its application to literary texts,

and those scholars who consider themselves to be cultural theorists are sometimes criticized for "avoiding" literature. And even the best creative writers in the country are often admonished if they only write fiction or poetry or drama and do not write critical essays about literature or the craft of creative writing.[18] In English studies, disciplinary imbalance persists in the most problematic ways, since, to adapt a phrase from Dewey (already quoted above), "one [discipline] cannot get in without crowding something else out" (*Educational* 303), and no discipline, no matter how narrowly conceived, wants to be crowded out.

Although I do not argue for a nostalgic return to the bygone days of literary generalists, I do think that a certain amount of institutional power is lost when common purpose dissolves. For with radical specialization, as English studies has experienced in the last half century, we are no longer able to represent ourselves to university administrations or public audiences as having coherent goals (other than the material fact that we work side by side). Although I cited Graff earlier as being relatively unconcerned about the disciplinary status of English studies, his position is actually more complex than that. Graff argues that "we *do* have good reason to be disturbed [. . .] if students and other nonprofessionals find the diverse activities of the English department mysterious and unintelligible" ("Is There" 11; my emphasis). Graff explains that academic departments represent themselves to students and nonacademics through their curricula, and if these curricula appear to be disconnected, with little logic to their overall structure, then "not only is the curriculum damaged [. . .] but the university's intelligibility in the eyes of its constituencies also suffers" (20).

If a department that houses disciplines as diverse as linguistics and discourse analysis, rhetoric and composition, creative writing, literature and literary criticism, critical theory and cultural studies, and English education defines for itself a limited function and scope—the criticism (method) of literature (object)—then many vital functions of that department will not fit into its expressed or implied scope, making the work of the department as a whole appear incoherent and completely unexplainable. Nancy A. Gutierrez writes, "While diversity is a strength, it can also be perceived as a weakness, especially if a particular entity believes it is homogeneous when it is heterogeneous."

Further, because of disciplinary hyperspecialization, English departments, as administrative structures based largely on the coverage model, are unable to represent in their curricula transformations in the field of English studies generally. For example, as the study of African American literature gains credibility in the field of English studies, and its specialists increasingly and rightfully demand representation in the formal curriculum of the English major, one of three things must happen in the context of the coverage model: African American literature courses are offered as electives, African American literature courses replace other American literature requirements, or the number of credit hours needed for an English major is increased to accommodate the new required courses. And what of Native American literature, Southern literature, Caribbean and other postcolonial literature, Latina literature, Asian American literature, and gay and lesbian literature, to name just a few?

To compound the problem (though I will argue later that this problem is also the beginning of a solution), since about the 1970s and 1980s English studies has experienced a surge of renewed interest in disciplines that were once overshadowed by the dominance of philology and New Criticism. Linguistics and discourse analysis gained a broader audience through attention to sociopolitical aspects of language use, as in systemic-functional linguistics and critical discourse analysis. Rhetoric and composition was revitalized by its turn from realist to social-constructionist, epistemic, and classical rhetorics. Creative writing was increasingly legitimated by its burgeoning professional workshops and conferences. Literature and literary criticism broadened their scope through renewed interest in public and popular (not just literary) texts. Critical theory and cultural studies gained broader acceptance among activist critics through their push toward participating in civic life and gaining what Michael Bérubé calls "public access." And English education was revitalized by the turn to pedagogy as a legitimate object of scholarly inquiry. With so many interesting disciplines laying rightful claim to curricular territory and financial resources, the period-based coverage model does not represent the verve and energy that define the field of English studies in the twenty-first century.

Another problem that specialization has created for English studies has to do with the narrow and insular kind of scholarship that is produced within the confines of our mutually exclusive disciplines. The more specialized our scholarship is the more divorced it becomes from the nonacademic world. While the best (i.e., most specialized) academic problems are narrow and focused, "real-world" problems are complicated mixtures of forces that all combine to create dissonance. As Easton puts it, "[T]he fact is that society confronts us with problems that are, for example, definable as neither political, philosophical, linguistic, economic, nor cultural alone. They may be all of these and more" (12). No single methodology from linguistics or discourse analysis or creative writing or rhetoric or composition or literature or literary criticism or critical theory or cultural studies or English education—no single methodology (or set of specialized methodologies) can solve a complex social problem. But if these disciplines comprised in English studies join forces, not merging their methods into a coherent supermethod, but maintaining their differences and directing their particular methods toward different parts of the problem, then power is gained, not lost. If English studies is to become "relevant" in the new century, it must turn its critical and productive lenses not only toward academic problems, which remain important, but also toward nonacademic ones, which must be viewed as equally important (Cushman). As Gunther Kress puts it, "[T]here is no aspect of practice in the English classroom that is not laden with social significance" (*Writing* 6).

A final problem that specialization creates for English studies is the devaluation of lower-division courses and the privileging of upper-division ones. Specialized course content is viewed as more "advanced" than courses covering broad subject matters, which also means, in the context of the coverage model, that specialized courses are offered less frequently than others. Thus, the Victorian prose specialist lives for the annual Victorian prose seminar in which all of her or his research can be put to good use. Within this value system, all other courses are treated as little more than professional duty, service to the department and university. With less specialization and more common purpose, I argue, will come a natural interest in revitalizing lower-division courses, which may also help to ease some of the labor problems that have plagued English departments from the very beginning.[19]

A number of scholars have responded to the problems of specialization in English studies with specific proposals for curricular reform. Stephen North describes three such proposals: secession, corporate compromise, and fusion. Later, I will propose a fourth model, *integration*.

When specialization becomes so advanced that we cannot have meaningful conversations with our colleagues or convince the keepers of the coverage model that there are important aspects of English studies not represented by it, some overlooked disciplines abandon Humpty Dumpty and go find their own wall to sit on.

Secession from English is by no means an uncommon or new occurrence. It happened in the early twentieth century when philology seceded to anthropology and oratory formed its own departments of speech communication; and throughout the twentieth century, viewing their methodologies to be more relevant to the social sciences than to literary studies, some linguistics faculty gradually broke away from English and formed separate departments. Some rhetoric and composition programs, too, perceiving the ideological gulf between humanistic literary studies and pragmatic writing studies to be too great to bridge, have seceded, creating departments of rhetoric and writing separate from departments of English.[20] Creative writers, caught up in the battle between literature and composition, have often been forced to make a difficult choice (to borrow words from the Clash): Should I stay or should I go? Some scholars, trained in literature and literary criticism, became, during the 1960s and 1970, more interested in applying their critical methodologies to popular culture than to literary texts, and many of these scholars seceded from English to form their own departments of American studies or popular culture. Scholars in critical theory and cultural studies, also not interested in literary texts as the paradigmatic object of analysis, broke away from English, establishing separate departments of cultural studies or film studies or

women's studies or African American studies, and so on. Finally, some English education programs were developed in departments or schools of education, but others that began in English have shifted over to education because education, quite simply, seemed more accommodating.

Is secession good for English studies? It depends. If English departments continue to describe their scope as literary texts and their function as, in the words of Richard Ohmann, "the fostering of literary culture and literary consciousness" (*English* 13), then there is only one logical course of action for linguistics and discourse analysis, rhetoric and composition, creative writing, critical theory and cultural studies, and English education. Secede. A truly democratic English department (one that exercises the power of each of its composite disciplines equally in the service of a larger goal) can, quite simply, never evolve out of a discipline that defines its scope and function purely in terms of literature.

A paradigmatic example of the conception of English studies that leads to secession is described by Ohmann (quoted above) in *English in America,* which was first published in 1976. I take Ohmann's 1976 edition of *English in America* to represent the kind of class warfare that was common in English departments after World War II and that, although the situation is, fortunately, changing, still remains entrenched in some departments across the country. The problem begins with Ohmann's description of the mission or function of an English department:

> I shall assume that we believe the study of literature to be the most central of our concerns—that, in fact, there would not *be* a field of English if literature did not exist. Our other concerns would then be distributed among linguists, communications experts, teachers of writing, and so on. Literature is what holds our interests together in a loose confederation, and I think it a safe guess that literature is what brought nearly all of us into the profession. Literature is our subject matter, and, this being so, an inquiry into the state of the profession must ask how we stand vis-à-vis literature: what are our responsibilities toward it, and how well are we executing them? (5–6)

Following this inauspicious introduction to "English," Ohmann then spends some time illustrating the failure of linguistics to illuminate more than the bare structural facts of literary language, and he devotes at least two chapters to critiquing composition's interest in praxis and its lack of concern with the highest literary values.[21] "Freshman English is our sore subject," Ohmann writes, and "our inability to make sense of freshman English for ourselves and our colleagues has made hard times even harder" (132). Ohmann cannot make sense of composition, of course, because it does not fit into his narrow definition of English *as literature*. Further, Ohmann ignores creative writing completely, and he seems strangely unaware of certain critical trends that had been current before he wrote *English in America*.

Stanley Fish, writing sometime after *English in America*, takes up (in some frustrating ways) the banner that Ohmann had hoisted. To begin with, Fish argues that academic disciplines are defined equally according to what they do and what they do not do. English studies endangers itself, its very academic survival is at stake, when it calls itself amorphous. English studies "must conceive of itself and be conceived by others as doing a specific, particular job. As doing this and not that, and surely not as doing everything, which is in effect to do nothing" (161–62). The discipline of English studies must be "defined by our being able to have a share of a franchise to which no one else can lay a plausible claim"; English studies must, in other words, be "distinctive" (162). Fair enough.

But this leads to Fish's claim that English studies needs to get back to *literature* and abandon historicism, political criticism, and interdisciplinarity, all of which infect English studies with external, extradisciplinary (i.e., extra*literary*) interests (164–72). The plea to return to literature, however, is especially problematic because, as historians of English studies repeatedly point out, "literature" simply cannot be defined ontologically, as a category of texts with "literary attributes" that no other texts possess (Brantlinger 15; Eagleton, *Literary* 1–14; Pratt, *Toward* xii). Eagleton writes,

> One can think of literature less as some inherent quality or set of qualities displayed by certain kinds of writing all the way from Beowulf to Virginia Woolf, than as a number of ways in which people relate themselves to writing. It would not be easy to isolate, from all that has variously been called "literature," some constant set of inherent features [. . .]. There is no "essence" of literature whatsoever. Any bit of writing may be read "non-pragmatically," if that is what reading a text as literature means, just as any writing may be read "poetically." (*Literary* 8)

Fortunately for English studies, as Graff puts it, "the return to literature declared by Fish and others seems about as likely as a return to manual typewriters" ("Is There" 14). Ohmann's and Fish's own values blind them to the fact that they are citizens in a broader community, a community whose primary goal is not to "foster literary culture and literary consciousness" but to analyze, critique, and produce discourse in social context. One crucial aspect of the discourses to be analyzed and critiqued is *literature,* to be sure, but there are other texts, not called literature, that are equally important and must fall under the purview of English studies in order for the discipline to be demonstrably coherent in the eyes of students, administrators, nonacademic audiences, and even many of its own practitioners.[22]

Exclusionary values such as those described by Ohmann and Fish are, of course, the same values that foster a desire for secession among some English studies disciplines. However, secession leads to further specialization, and in time it is conceivable that there may be separate departments housing professional writing, classical rhetoric, screenwriting, poetry writing, generative grammar, discourse linguistics, young adult literature, whole language, critical theory, media studies, and literacy studies. Secession, in other words, may alleviate some immediate problems relating to curriculum and budget, but it does not solve these problems in the long run; given time, they will recur, along with the divisiveness that comes with constant specialization. Further, the kind of specialization that both leads to and follows secession actually reduces the institutional power of *all* disciplines involved. As David B. Downing points out, "The aesthetic and the political, the literary and the rhetorical, the textual and the extratextual are deeply intertwined, and their disciplinary separation has been costly. Administrators out to cut budgets are the only ones to gain from the internecine warfare among competing subdivisions. In the end, disciplinary isolation makes any small unit or program more vulnerable to administrative surveillance" (31). Better to integrate than to separate.

A second response to specialization in English studies is, as North suggests, "corporate compromise." North describes corporate compromise as the designation of a "synthesizing term" that will hold "the conflicted enterprise [of English] together" while "finding some way to present and preserve all of its competing interests" (71). Corporate compromise usually involves one discipline in English studies taking managerial responsibility for the others, ideally (but certainly not always) in a democratic fashion. Although it has been the most common strategy to unify the various disciplines that constitute English studies, corporate compromise has not been without its own problems.[23]

Recognizing the failure of literary studies to govern democratically, some scholars, including Patrick Brantlinger and Eagleton, have argued that cultural studies should take over the helm. Cultural studies recognizes all texts (all discourses) as falling within its scope, and its methods of analysis are better suited to making the knowledge produced in the discipline (and the other disciplines that make up English studies) useful to a larger public. Alternatively, Berlin argues that (social-epistemic) rhetoric should manage the disciplines that comprise English studies because it is the study of signifying practices, and all disciplines (even those outside of English studies itself) are defined by the signifying practices they use to produce and convey knowledge. But cultural studies and rhetoric are coherent and active disciplines within English studies, and, as such, would risk promoting their own values over those of other disciplines.

One of the most interesting attempts at corporate compromise is the reference to literacy as the managing term. Literacy itself is not a discipline in English studies, and so it would not, it seems at first, favor any over others. Tilly Warnock explains,

> English departments teach reading and writing; all members of the department are engaged in literacy work of various kinds, from functional literacy to highly theoretical literacy work. Despite differences in teaching, research, and service, we are all committed to teaching language and literature as strategies for coping and as equipment for living [. . .]. I advocate that we present ourselves as literacy workers of various kinds, degrees, and purposes, understanding that our decisions are ethical and that our work as teachers of reading and writing consists of strategic responses to specific, stylized questions. (148)

Warnock concludes with what she calls a "decree":

> We in English departments are all already engaged in literacy education of various kinds, and presenting ourselves as united in teaching reading and writing is the most persuasive rhetoric we can use in certain contexts with our colleagues across the university and with the citizens of our local communities and states [. . .]. This is how we are known and understood by people within the university, and this is how we are known and respected by people outside the university. Although we have spent years distinguishing ourselves from each other, within the department, to outsiders we are more alike than we are different. (151–52)

The problem here, of course, is that *literacy,* particularly as Warnock (a rhetoric and composition scholar) describes it, is amenable to linguistics and discourse analysis, rhetoric and composition, and English education, but it would simply not be accepted as the scope of English studies by creative writing, literature and literary criticism, or critical theory and cultural studies. It is, in the end, not as inclusive as it first appears to be.

Opponents of corporate compromise argue that these equally specialized managerial disciplines—whether cultural studies, rhetoric, or literacy—do not in any way represent the interests of all the other disciplines that make up English studies, and the move is little more than a political attempt to colonize and marginalize important scholarly enterprises. If it is our purpose (and it *is*) to illustrate the equally crucial roles that linguistics and discourse analysis, rhetoric and composition, creative writing, literature and literary criticism, critical theory and cultural studies, and English education all play in accomplishing the mission of English studies generally, then corporate compromise is the wrong model for reforming the discipline.

The third response to specialization in English studies that North describes is called "fusion," a seldom practiced variety of curriculum reform that took hold of the SUNY Albany PhD program during the 1990s. North writes,

> [. . .] fusion, it might be called; bringing disparate elements together under sufficient pressure and with sufficient energy to transform them into a single new entity, one quite distinct from any of the original components. Or, to put it in terms specific to English Studies: rather than ending the field's divisions by breaking it up along the lines of conflict (dissolution), or packaging those conflicts for the purposes of curricular delivery (corporate compromise), the object would be to harness the energy generated by the conflicts in order to forge some new disciplinary enterprise altogether. (73)

North proposes that a fusion-based curriculum would incorporate elements of every discipline (he only lists three: literature, rhetoric and composition, and creative writing) in each course; thus, a course primarily in Victorian literature would also include studies in Victorian rhetoric as well as response poems or dramatic performances, etc.

While fusion is certainly one of the most promising models for curricular reform in English studies, I do have objections to North's description of it. First, while I like the *idea* of fusion, I am uncomfortable that, if each course includes content from all of the disciplines, the curriculum might never extend beyond a basic level. Further, the American professoriate is thoroughly specialized, and entrusting the integrity of every discipline to every professor is not a desirable scenario to my mind. Besides, if any curriculum should be fused it is the *undergraduate* curriculum, not the graduate curriculum.

If specialization defines English studies, and has been its constant companion since the inception of the discipline, and if secession, corporate compromise, and fusion are not adequate models for a renewed English studies, is there *any* hope for coherence, or are we doomed to a life of talking to ourselves? James C. Raymond believes that we should not hold our breath:

> Of course there is no discipline in the English department. It is a collection of disparate activities with multiple objects of inquiry, vaguely articulated methodologies, and diverse notions of proof. Whatever arrangement exists among its competing scholarly, artistic, and pedagogical interests is a marriage of inconvenience, grounded not on any passion or admiration that would justify the union but on habit, historical accident, economic dependency, and perhaps anxiety about what people would think if we went our separate ways and whether we would actually survive. ("Play's" 1)

But Graff thinks "there is potential coherence in English studies." He is careful, however, to warn us that "it is a coherence that cannot be reduced to the kind of consensus on fundamentals that has traditionally constituted our idea of a discipline. For me [i.e., Graff], the source of this potential coherence lies precisely in the conversations between different and conflicting languages of justification and practices, conversations that will likely remain unresolved and whose outcome is not predictable" ("Is There" 12). But unresolved and unpredictable outcomes should not deter the effort. Graff concludes, "Today, English seems further than ever from defining a common disciplinary project, [. . .] yet the failure to confront the conflicts that result from the increased diversity creates the fragmentation that leaves students and other onlookers confused" (20). I believe the answer lies in a democratic (though certainly not radical) conception of English studies as the disciplinary *integration* of linguistics and discourse analysis, rhetoric and composition, creative writing, literature and literary criticism, critical theory and cultural studies, and English education.

The New English Studies

If conversation among the disciplines constituting English studies is, as Graff suggests, one way to begin healing the wounds caused by hyperspecialization, how can we begin the communication process? Benedict Anderson might say that each discipline in English studies has imagined itself as a sovereign community, independent and self-enclosed, and the difficult work of disciplinary integration requires us to *re*imagine ourselves as members of a larger community, a community of English studies disciplines committed to the analysis, critique, and production of discourse in social context. I believe that two models for integration, Kenneth Burke's notion of *identification* and Stuart Hall's theory of *articulation,* lead us productively in the direction of reimagining English studies as a coherent community of disciplines.

In *A Rhetoric of Motives,* Burke describes *identification* as a process whereby two or more entities (or disciplines, in our case) perceive a union of interests despite their unique qualities. Burke writes,

> A is not identical with his colleague, B. But insofar as their interests are joined, A is *identified* with B. Or he may *identify himself* with B even when their interests are not joined, if he assumes that they are, or is persuaded to believe so [. . .]. In being identified with B, A is "substantially one" with a person other than himself. Yet at the same time he remains unique, an individual locus of motives. Thus he is both joined and separate, at once a distinct substance and consubstantial with another [. . .]. A doctrine of *consubstantiality*, either explicit or implicit, may be necessary to any way of life. For substance, in the old philosophies, was an *act;* and a way of life is an *acting-together;* and in acting together, men have common sensations, concepts, images, ideas, attitudes that make them *consubstantial.* (20–21).

And later, Burke continues, "Any specialized activity participates in a larger unit of action. 'Identification' is a word for the autonomous activity's place in this wider context" (27). In English studies, then, the disciplines that constitute the field are not identical—they do not examine the same objects or use the same methods—but their *interests* are joined in that they identify themselves with the larger project of English studies. They are substantially one yet sovereign enough to pursue unique subgoals and satisfy individual motives. They are both joined and separate; they are consubstantial.

In "On Postmodernism and Articulation," Stuart Hall describes *articulation* as a method for understanding and changing power structures in particular communities. Hall writes,

> In England, the term [articulation] has a nice double meaning because "articulate" means to utter, to speak forth, to be articulate. It carries that sense of language-ing, of expressing, etc. But we also speak of an "articulated" lorry (truck): a lorry where the front (cab) and back (trailer) can, but need not necessarily, be connected to one another. The two parts are connected to each other, but through a specific linkage that can be broken. An articulation is thus the form of the connection that *can* make a unity of two different elements under certain conditions. It is a linkage that is not necessary, determined, absolute and essential for all time. You have to ask, under what circumstances *can* a connection be forged or made? So the so-called "unity" of a discourse is really the articulation of different, distinct elements which can be re-articulated in different ways because they have no necessary "belongingness." (141)

English studies, within this framework, has historically been articulated in an unfortunate way, with literary studies as the perpetual cab and the "other" disciplines as trailers. But the linkages that constitute any articulation of discourses can be broken and rearranged to form a new unity, a new English studies. Herein lies the central problem with defining English as literary studies (or cultural studies or rhetoric or literacy, for that matter): when social problems, nonacademic problems, problems in the so-called real world emerge, and these problems are related to discourse, to communication, to representation, then English studies is diminished if the linkages that define its articulation are perceived as inalterable, determined, inevitable.

In order for English studies to approach nonacademic problems (and it must do this in order to retrieve its sense of worth in the larger social community), that lorry must be able to be *re*articulated in different ways depending on the needs of the situation. If Birmingham, Alabama (or any other city or town, for that matter), experiences a decline in public literacy, it would be remarkable if the representatives of English studies said, "Sorry, we just do literature." English studies should be—*must be*—the leader in solving this problem, perhaps by starting a literacy center funded by the university and the community.

English studies can move from being a set of unrelated subdisciplines to a powerful collection of *integrated* (structurally separate but functionally interrelated) disciplines with a coherent and collective goal that does not compromise each discipline's unique integrity. I propose that the goal of this integrated English studies should be the analysis, critique, and production of discourse in social context. And all of the various disciplines that make up English studies—linguistics and discourse analysis, rhetoric and composition, creative writing, literature and literary criticism, critical theory and cultural studies, and English education—contribute equally important functions toward accomplishing this goal. But there must be constant dialectical contact between the specialized disciplines and the larger project of English studies in order to curb further separation and divisiveness.

The three activities that I call "analysis, critique, and production" need, first, to be rearticulated as functionally complementary, not ideologically opposed. They are different, yes, but interrelated and interdependent as well. The long-standing debate between linguists and literary critics is an ideological one in which the values associated with objective analysis (for linguists) and subjective critique (for literary scholars) conflict in destructive ways (Hayes). In fact, analysis can never be fully objective, since the selection of texts and the selection of analytical methodologies are intentional, subjective, and political in nature; and critique without analysis is equivalent to an academic knee-jerk reaction. Analysis is the foundation of critique (even for the literary critic), and critique is integral to the analytical process (even for the linguist).

Literary studies is often ideologically opposed to disciplines that foreground the production of language, such as creative writing, rhetoric and composition, and even cultural studies, with its recent interest in the production of public discourse. Robert Scholes points out that, from a traditional literary perspective, creative writing results in the production of "pseudo-literature and composition results in the production of pseudo-non-literature" (5–7). But if, as I will argue, curricula need to take account of the world for which their students (subjects) are being prepared, then critique simply is not enough. In *Writing the Future,* Kress argues, "[T]he traditional role of the academic [has been] to offer critique of actions set in train by others. My view is that our own present is a time when critique is no longer enough, and in fact it is no longer the real issue; the real issue is that of the

proposal of alternative visions; reviving that unfashionable genre of the utopia, and acting strongly in contesting, in public life, alternatives that do not offer the values that I, you, we believe should shape our tomorrow" (xi). Analysis, critique, and production are distinct skills and processes, but all three are necessary and crucial aspects of a complete education in English studies.

The next keyword in the proposed functional definition of English studies is *discourse*. There is a well-known passage in Burke's *The Philosophy of Literary Form* that describes discourse as a conversation or, better yet, an argument. Burke writes,

> Imagine that you enter a parlor. You come late. When you arrive, others have long preceded you, and they are engaged in a heated discussion, a discussion too heated for them to pause and tell you exactly what it is about. In fact, the discussion had already begun long before any of them got there, so that no one present is qualified to retrace for you all the steps that had gone before. You listen for a while, until you decide that you have caught the tenor of the argument; then you put in your oar. Someone answers; you answer him; another comes to your defense; another aligns himself against you, to either the embarrassment or gratification of your opponent, depending upon the quality of your ally's assistance. However, the discussion is interminable. The hour grows late, you must depart. And you do depart with the discussion still vigorously in progress. (110–11)

This notion of discourse, then, implies that language is never static; it is always part of a larger process or set of processes. While it is possible to study language as a product (i.e., synchronically), we must always keep in mind the dynamic nature of language and discourse.

The last keyword, *social context*, is crucial to a full and productive understanding of English studies that has the potential for relevance outside of academia. In 1923, C. K. Ogden and I. A. Richards published *The Meaning of Meaning,* a landmark volume on language, thought, and symbolism that was popular among literary critics before World War II. This book contained a "supplementary essay" by renowned anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski. In this essay, titled "The Problem of Meaning in Primitive Languages," Malinowski explains that the languages of primitive cultures are comprehensible only in social context;

thus, the anthropologist must not only provide literal translations of primitive language, but also "free" translations that provide the English "sense" of the language, and also (most important) a description of the social activities that surround the language and give it meaning. Just over a decade later, Malinowski would admit that context infuses language with meaning in all cultures, not just primitive ones (Halliday and Hasan 7–8). Similarly, in "Context and Thought," Dewey claims that philosophy has lost its meaning and significance because it ignores the social context in which thought takes place and to which it applies. Any utterance is meaningless outside the constraining purview of a specific context; context imbues utterances with meaning. I believe that literary studies, as the sole representative of English, ignores the broader context of English studies, and thus lacks the significant meaning imbued by that broader context.

The dual processes of specialization and expansion have transformed English studies into a "contact zone" of epic proportions. A contact zone is a space of conflict in which different groups come into contact, usually under conditions of inequality and coercion (Pratt, "Arts" 34). For over a century now, English departments have been a space of conflict within which ideological and material struggles among the disciplines comprised by English studies have been marked by inequality and coercion. And the English studies curriculum has been the most contested space within the administrative structure of English departments. We may speak all we want about fusion and integration, but until the actual curriculum changes—until the path through which English studies students pass is made representative of the discipline as a whole—English studies will remain mired in colonializing discourses that suppress and marginalize crucial enterprises. How can this new definition of English studies translate into curriculum? This is a question that must not be overlooked for some very important reasons.

Graff highlights the politics of curriculum design: "[T]he curriculum is the major form of representation through which academic departments identify themselves to the world (or fail to do so)" ("Is There" 12). And Kress points out the ethics of curriculum:

> A curriculum is a design for a future social subject, and via that envisioned subject a design for a future society. That is, the curriculum puts forward knowledges, skills, meanings, values in the present which will be telling in the lives of those who experience the curriculum, ten or twenty years later. Forms of pedagogy experienced by children now in school suggest to them forms of social relations which they are encouraged to adopt, adapt, modify and treat as models. The curriculum, and its associated pedagogy, puts forward a set of cultural, linguistic and social resources which students have available as resources for their own transformation, in relation to which (among others) students constantly construct, reconstruct and transform their subjectivity. ("Representational" 16)

If it is the goal of the new English studies to prepare students for a full and meaningful existence both inside and outside of the classroom, and if we envision a world where literature is one of many important kinds of texts with which our students will have to contend, then some curricular reform is necessary, and I believe that integration is the best model for that reform.

But what about the English departments that have already experienced secession, that, for example, have no composition, linguistics, or English education courses or programs?[24] These departments must undergo a process of *re*integration. Yet it is simply not realistic (or even wise) to expect stand-alone composition or linguistics or English education programs to insert themselves back into the dominant administrative structure of literature-based English departments. There are at least three conditions that must be met for reintegration to succeed.

First, reintegration after secession must begin with a strong desire to join forces. If any party involved is apathetic about reintegration, then no significant bonds will (or should) be formed. The desire to reintegrate comes from what Burke calls identification, or the recognition that all of the disciplines making up English studies share in a greater context, some larger substance—they are consubstantial. When departments of literature (even when they call themselves departments of English) view their objects of study, their critical methodologies, and their social mission as indissolubly rooted in poetics alone (i.e., when literature faculty view themselves as sovereign heirs to the departmental throne), then, for the sake of all other disciplines in English studies, reintegration must not occur. But where identification is present and there is a desire to reintegrate, then reintegration leads to greater disciplinary coherence.

Second, reintegration must be based on the pursuit of a common goal, the analysis, critique, and production of discourse in social context. Competing goals, or a dominant goal defined by a single object of analysis, literature, will only result in the kind of divisiveness that leads to secession in the first place. Coexistence without any sense of common purpose breeds infighting that weakens English studies as a whole project, not just the individual departments where the battles are most severe. As we have seen in recent years, English programs that generate intense internal strife (SUNY Albany, for example) are easy fodder for conservative media that revel in making the discipline of English seem petty and narcissistic. Reintegration must be accompanied with a transcending sense of common purpose, a shared *telos* or goal, if it is to succeed without senseless marginalization or a damaging descent into trifling spats.

Third, reintegrated disciplines must create institutionally recognized bonds that are functional. Functional relationships emerge most productively from external, not internal, exigencies and motivations. Internal exigencies, such as the need for increased funding, lead to self-serving motives, for example regaining control over required first-year composition courses in order to increase a literature department's credit-hour production and fatten its purse. But functional relationships based on external exigencies require cooperation without the administrative connections that can enable domination. For example, a stand-alone writing program may join forces with English education to establish a National Writing Project site in response to a felt need to improve writing instruction at all levels of the local curriculum. A literacy crisis in a city or town might motivate linguists to join forces with critical theorists, seeking funding for a literacy center to teach the power of language to those who need it most. Literary critics might join forces with creative writers to establish a young authors' conference promoting literary culture and values throughout the state. Functional relationships like these lead to the cooperative search for new resources, not the self-interested allocation of existing funds that have led many disciplines to leave English departments in search of more equitable administrative homes. National Writing Project sites, literacy centers, and young authors' conferences—just a few among dozens of possibilities—require a fundamental change in the ways the disciplines that constitute English studies are conceived, or, as Hall might say, "articulated."

But teachers and administrators are only a portion of our full audience. In order for *students* to rearticulate the "lorry" of English studies according to the demands of any given situation, they need instruction in all of the disciplines that it comprises. Functional relationships among these disciplines will lead to productive pedagogical relationships, and when these functional relationships are explored in different academic and public contexts, themes may emerge as a basis for a new English studies: pedagogy or public discourse, for example. Linguistics and discourse analysis, rhetoric and composition, creative writing, literature and literary criticism, critical theory and cultural studies, and English education will each, in its own way, contribute to the development of these themes, equipping students with tools they will need to be productive citizens of their own academic, professional, personal, and public communities.

* * *

English Studies: An Introduction to the Discipline(s) is our response to these felt needs. Throughout the remaining pages, readers will discover the important qualities and functions of English studies' constituent disciplines and explore the productive differences and similarities among them that make English studies worth learning about. Although the chapters in this book are arranged in a certain order, readers may approach the book as a kind of textbook or as a resource. Since each chapter is written mainly for nonspecialists, readers might begin with the chapters on disciplines they know the least about and progress toward other, more familiar chapters. Other readers, less familiar with English studies as a whole, might read the chapters in their present order. However readers choose to approach *English Studies: An Introduction to the Discipline(s)*, its editor and authors have three main goals in mind for the book.

Our first goal is the most crucial, yet also the most modest: to educate English studies practitioners (students, teachers, and administrators) about the intricacies of the composite disciplines that make up English studies. Students who understand the full scope of English studies and its disciplines will be better equipped to make informed choices about their plans for advanced studies or career options. Teachers who specialize in one English studies discipline will serve their students more effectively if they can make connections among the other disciplines. Administrators who are responsible for evaluating and rewarding diverse faculties will serve their departments more fairly if they are able to assess the work of every faculty member with real knowledge and without disciplinary bias.

The second goal of this book is to open up the possibility for identification among English studies practitioners. Few functional relationships can be formed if specialists do not inquire into (let alone respect) the other disciplines that make up English studies. Effective National Writing Project sites, interdisciplinary literacy centers, and young authors' conferences will not emerge unless every discipline in English studies comes to respect the creative energy, academic values, and public commitments of every other discipline in English studies. If English studies practitioners see in each chapter of this book a glimmer of common purpose among the constituent disciplines that make up the field (a glimmer not perceived before), then our second goal will have been achieved.

This book's third goal cannot be achieved within the confines of these pages, so we leave its fate in the hands of our readers. The third goal is to create a new attitude toward English studies, one that leads to the equal use of strengths from all of its composite disciplines to solve problems that are not only restricted to rooms with desks and chalkboards (or computers and whiteboards). English is useful. *English* is *use*ful. And we must learn to *use* it more fully to solve important problems. When we scan our dusty bookshelves, we do not see the material representations of our disciplines. Our books are not us. Disciplines are constituted in the ways that knowledge is generated, developed, used, and integrated—by people—into a larger system of knowledge whose concerns press beyond the narrow disciplinary scopes of linguistics or discourse analysis or rhetoric or composition or

creative writing or literature or literary criticism or critical theory or cultural studies or English education. But, as I have argued, the first step in this difficult process is to understand each of the composite disciplines comprised by English studies, to respect their differences, and to strive for identification.

In Chapter 1, Ellen Barton describes the uneasy relationship between linguistics, or the scientific study of language, and the rest of the English studies disciplines, which are usually conceived as arts (not sciences). However, Barton finds common ground in discourse analysis, which examines the organization and implications of language use beyond the sentence level. In her own study of medical discourse, for example, Barton finds problematic differences between physicians' uses of "back-stage" discourse (honest and blunt) in diagnosis discussions with other physicians and "front-stage" discourse (vague and circuitous) in treatment consultations with their cancer patients. Some physicians, according to Barton, find it difficult to merge these different discourses, desiring not to destroy hope in seriously ill patients. As Barton points out, such studies, drawing on linguistics, rhetoric, cultural studies, and other disciplines, can have a significant influence on the understanding of the discourse of medicine and the ways in which physicians are trained to interact with patients.

Chapter 2 describes the formation of rhetoric and composition as a disciplinary force within English studies. Janice M. Lauer explains that while rhetoric was the cornerstone of education from antiquity through much of the nineteenth century, composition studies did not exist as a full discipline until its emergence in the 1960s. What fueled this emergence was composition's rediscovery of its old kin, rhetoric. With rhetoric as its new (or renewed) foundation, composition grew in scope and significance. Now, with dozens of journals, annual conferences, and abundant PhD programs in the field, rhetoric and composition is recognized as a critical enterprise in the whole project of English studies. No discipline can progress without practitioners who write clearly and argue forcefully for their view of the universe of English (or any other universe, for that matter).

Katharine Haake, in Chapter 3, takes us on two intertwining journeys, first, through her own experience as a struggling creative writer, and second, though the experience of creative writing as a struggling discipline in the context of English studies. Through its close relationship to literary studies and composition, and also with the establishment of respected workshops and seminars, creative writing has become a crucial discipline that highlights aesthetic production, enhancing students' experiences with literature and making them effective communicators.

In Chapter 4, Richard C. Taylor examines the history of literature and literary criticism in the context of the institutions that foster its development. Here Taylor takes on difficult issues, such as the literary canon and who belongs in it, periodicity and the politics of historical division, and the nature and function of literature itself.

Chapter 5, on critical theory and cultural studies, describes the development of certain critical methodologies, such as Marxism, new historicism, psychoanalysis, feminism, and multiculturalism, in the grassroots efforts of political activists. Amy J. Elias explains that these methods serve the interests of English studies practitioners generally, as new approaches to interpretation, and they also extend the scope of English studies beyond the literary canon and beyond the university.

Finally, Robert P. Yagelski describes in Chapter 5 the competing interests of English education, first, as a pragmatic discipline that trains teachers to maintain the social status quo in secondary education, and second, as a theoretical discipline that generates knowledge on the socially transformative possibilities of education generally. For Yagelski, education (at whatever level) produces social citizens, and in order for education to be a viable social institution, it must produce citizens who contribute to a sustainable future. English education is a more naturally integrated discipline than others in English studies, and, that being the case, this chapter serves as a fitting conclusion.

Each chapter of this book, then, is an argument for the value—the right to equal status—of each individual discipline among all English studies disciplines, yet it is also an argument for disciplinary integration. Although disciplinary sovereignty is cherished, no chapter argues in favor of total secession; although disciplinary knowledge is valued, no chapter argues for managerial control over all of English studies; although disciplinary integration is proposed, no chapter argues for a (re)turn to English generalists who teach anything and everything under the sun. If, through this book, readers who specialize (or want to specialize) in one discipline in English studies learn something about the intellectual value of, or find some common purpose with, other disciplines in English studies, then our first two goals will have been achieved. The third goal, however, remains (as I have said) in the hands of our readers.

Notes

1. In "An Identity Crisis?" Nancy A. Gutierrez writes, "we are at a disadvantage in lobbying for public resources if we cannot explain what we are, for it is clear that the larger public and even some of our own colleagues across our campuses have defined 'English departments' in ways that hurt us—either as narrowly ideological sites; as sites at which only rarefied, rather silly discussions occur; or as sites in which only such skills as writing and document production are taught, with no realization that those skills are grounded in theoretical constructs."

2. Less dramatic (though no less serious) declarations of crisis in English studies are also made by W. Jackson Bate, Peter Brooker, Graham Hough, Jonathan Brody Kramnick, Gunther Kress (*Writing*), Alan Sinfield, and Peter Widdowson. Richard Ohmann, interestingly, situates "English and the Humanities within the long, historical crisis of capitalism" (*Politics* 6).

3. In 1966, when the "relevance" of nearly every social institution in Europe and America was being called into question, Frank Kermode explained that "crisis is a way of thinking about one's moment, and not inherent in the moment itself" (345). Indeed, when we idealize the past and imagine a utopian future, how can the present be anything but a crisis? Kermode explains,

> When you read, as you must almost every passing day, that ours is the great age of crisis—technological, military, cultural—you may well simply nod and proceed calmly to your business; for this assertion, upon which a multitude of important books is founded, is nowadays no more surprising than the opinion that the earth is round. There seems to me to be some danger in this situation, if

> only because such a myth, uncritically accepted, tends like prophesy to shape a future to confirm it. Nevertheless crisis, however facile the conception, is inescapably a central element in our endeavors toward making sense of our world. (339)

In the age of academic accountability, declaring a discipline to be in crisis is far more likely to result in radical budget cuts than radical intellectual change.

4. In "Theses on the Philosophy of History," Walter Benjamin describes an image that highlights the crucial intersection of history and progress:

> A Klee painting named "Angelus Novus" shows an angel looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned to the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. This storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress. (257–58)

5. In *What Is English?* Elbow writes, "it's only a recent development for English departments to define themselves as departments of literature. We descend from departments of rhetoric" (95). And in "Overwork/ Underpay," Robert Connors explains that "Rhetoric as a college-level discipline entered the nineteenth century as one of the most respected fields in higher education" (181).

6. For a detailed history of the development of English studies before the rise of the modern university, see Thomas P. Miller's *The Formation of College English*.

7. Dewey writes, "Like the similar conception of a fixed and obvious gulf between the elect and the unregenerated, it cannot stand the pressure of the free communication and interaction of modern life. It is no longer possible to hug complacently the ideal that the academic teacher is perforce devoted to high spiritual ideals, while the doctor, lawyer, and man of business are engaged in the mercenary pursuit of vulgar utilities" (*Educational* 309).

8. Andresen writes,

> The development and codification of American anthropology clearly plays a role in the history of American linguistics in that, with the separation of the arcs of development, a field known as "linguistic anthropology" must be carved out as something distinct from "linguistics" with no qualifying adjective. With the progressive dismantling of the political conception of language, which had built in the language-nation intersection, and with the concomitant rise of the mechanical conception of language, which became coextensive with the field of "linguistics," the concept of "nation" shifted disciplinary ground from language studies to anthropology. (170)

9. "By the end of the century," Sampson writes, "the data for historical linguistics came to seem a mere assembly of sound-shifts which had occurred for no good reason and which tended in no particular direction [. . .]. Now it really did begin to seem fair to regard these scholars as mere antiquarians studying individual quirks of particular languages for their own sake, rather than as serious scientists" (33).

10. Connors points out that speech communication maintained its ties to the rhetorical tradition, which composition did not, and this simple historical fact had a lot to do with speech communication's subsequent success and composition's continued marginalization:

> Rhetorical history never died, but the bulk of the work done there from the 1920s through the 1940s was the effort of scholars in the relatively new field of speech communication. Unlike compositionists, speech rhetoricians had never severed their ties to the history of rhetoric, and they were thus able to grid historical methodologies onto their work in ways immediately recognizable as scholarly. As a result, speech departments had established the legitimacy of their discipline and were granting their own doctorates a scant decade after declaring the secession of speech teachers from the National Council of Teachers of English in 1914. They were speaking a language the rest of the academy could understand and accredit. ("Composition" 407)

11. Writing a few years after Hough, and clearly echoing his indignant tone, Douglas Bush writes,

> Displaying our usual emotional instability, we had an immediate wave of zeal for the despised egghead, for "crash programs" in science. It would all be rather comic if it were not tragic. The first large specific consequence was the government's program for fi-

> nancial aid for scientific education. This was not based on any concern for science but only on fear of Russia; astrology or alchemy would have got the same support if they could have helped in the arms race. So, in the middle of the twentieth century, the chief end of American education is the training of military engineers, and our nearest approach to the angels is by way of missiles and spaceships. (182)

12. Patrick Brantlinger writes, "no text contains meanings the way an apple contains seeds; meanings are generated in communicative relations; the understanding of a text always relies on what lies beyond it, on contexts, including 'the reader'" (22).

13. It is important to note that in late-nineteenth-century Europe, the word *studies* had been added to *English* by philologists in order to *restrict* this unwieldy and haphazard subject into a more specific and credible one (the scientific *study,* as opposed to the aesthetic *appreciation*, of language and literature). In America, however, the word *studies* was added to *English* much later, following the social revolutions of the 1960s, to represent an *expanding* notion of what it means to study English.

14. Bush writes, "it was no doubt inevitable that the immense growth of modern knowledge should lead to subdivision and specialization, but it was no less inevitable that such specialization should be in many ways disastrous" (173).

15. In their introduction to *Redrawing the Boundaries*, Stephen Greenblatt and Giles Gunn attribute specialization in English studies to "changes in the underlying organization of knowledge that defines the discipline" (2). Greenblatt and Gunn write,

> As the parameters of individual historical fields have been redrawn and new theoretical and methodological orientations have been devised, the possibility of a unifying, totalizing grasp of our own subject has, for all but the very few, receded [. . .]. In the face of new pressures of professionalization, the global generalities and disciplinary distinctions that once held departments together are coming to seem less meaningful. We are fast becoming a profession of specialties and subspecialties whose rapid formation and re-formation prevent many members from keeping abreast of significant developments even in their own areas of expertise. (2–3)

16. Most of us will recognize the following dates as periodic divisions for British literature:

> Unknown–428, the Celtic and Roman period, which ends when the Germanic tribes invade Celtic Britain;
>
> 428–1100, the Old English period, which ends with the conclusion of the First Crusade and the beginning of the reign of Henry I;
>
> 1100–1350, the Anglo-Norman period, which ends during the early part of the Hundred Years' War and with the waning of the Black Plague;
>
> 1350–1500, the Middle English period, which ends during the reign of Henry VII, the first Tudor king, and with the publication of *Everyman;*
>
> 1500–1660, the Renaissance period, which ends near the completion of Shakespeare's Globe theater;
>
> 1660–1798, the Neoclassical period, which ends with the "Triumph of Romanticism";
>
> 1798–1870, the Romantic period, which ends a year before the publication of Darwin's *Descent of Man;*
>
> 1870–1914, the Realistic period, which ends with the beginning of World War I;
>
> 1914–1965, the Modernist period, which ends with the social revolutions of the 1960s;
>
> 1965–present, the postmodernist period, is still with us.

These dates and period titles are taken from the "Outline of Literary History" in C. Hugh Holman's *Handbook to Literature*, fourth edition, which I purchased during the early 1980s while an undergraduate English education major at Illinois State University. Although there may be some discussion about the beginning and ending dates of certain periods, and other periods may be further divided, there is rarely any discussion about the institutional *practice* (let alone the politics) of periodizing literature.

The practice of periodizing literature began in the late nineteenth century. As all of the disciplines in the new modern universities were dividing into more and more specialized subdisciplines, the philologists, who dominated English departments at the time, followed suit. It is crucial to remember that these philologists were not interested in literature *per se,* or in the aesthetic experience of reading it; they were scientists interested in the intricacies of language change over time, and literature was their object of analysis because it had been consistently recorded and, more than any other texts, had survived the ravages of time. The first and third periods in British literary history, then, were established and named, not because of any unique *literary* qualities of the writing produced during that time, but because the *language* of the literature was dominated by different national influences: Celtic and Roman influences in the first period and Anglo-Norman influences in the third. The dates of the Old English period were established because of the Germanic *linguistic* influences on the language of the time, not because the *literary* qualities of the language shifted. And the Middle English period is different from the Old English period, again, because the languages (not necessarily the literatures) are significantly different:

Old English, from *The Vercelli Book* ("The Dream of the Rood"):

> Hwæt, ič swefna cyst secgan wille
> Behold, I desire to tell the best of dreams

Middle English, from *The South English Legendary* (Prologue) (pronounce þ as *th*):

> Nou blouweþ þe niwe frut þat late bygan to springe
> Now bloweth the new fruit that late began to spring

Once divided, the periods stuck, though the ways in which the periods were explained soon shifted. As the philologists seceded to anthropology departments and literary critics again rose to power in English, these critics maintained the early philological period dates but began to explain them as shifts in *literary* and *aesthetic* (no longer linguistic) qualities.

17. David B. Downing argues,

> While the strict processes of disciplining have become the quintessential measure of academic value, the institutionalized protocols for disciplinary practices often exclude or delimit a significant range of socially valuable intellectual labor. This is especially the case for certain activities many English practitioners perform: research or teaching that focuses on ameliorating the local needs of specific groups of people, process-oriented work, research that does not narrowly define objects of investigation, work that engages rhetorical modes other than expository argumentation, or writing for broad audiences through publication in nonacademic magazines and books. (26)

18. Downing points out that

> Within English departments, one of the key points of contact for the exercise of disciplinary power takes place through evaluation and hiring committees and the particular criteria they deploy to make crucial personnel decisions. Disciplinary evaluation criteria become measures of competitive individualism as colleagues strive to acquire symbolic capital primarily through their publications and other forms of acceptable labor. Without significant alteration, disciplinarity both discourages and devalues the kind of collaboration necessary for many of the diverse forms of rhetorical, political, and intellectual work that English professors actually perform. Without considerable study of how to alter our evaluation practices, disciplinary criteria reign in powerful de facto ways. (32)

19. For critiques of problems relating to incoherent intellectual labor and the oppressive contingent labor force in English studies, particularly in literature and composition, see Bérubé (*Employment*); Graff (*Beyond*, *Clueless*, and *Professing*); Nelson; Schell; Schell and Stock; Shumway and Dionne; Sosnoski; and Williams.

20. Many of the most recent secessions of rhetoric and writing programs from English departments are chronicled in Peggy O'Neill, Angela Crow, and Larry W. Burton's edited collection *A Field of Dreams: Independent Writing Programs and the Future of Composition Studies*. And in an *ADE Bulletin* article titled "After Composition," Karyn Z. Sproles, then chair of the English department at James Madison University, describes her own experience of rhetoric and composition's secession from the perspective of literary studies.

21. Ohmann's critique of composition was based, by the way, on a group of 1965 first-year English textbooks, not on the interesting work that was starting to be published in the field's professional journals. The 1996 reissue of *English in America* includes revised and new sections that argue for the full disciplinary status of previously marginalized fields such as rhetoric and composition.

22. Interestingly, the problem that Ohmann (in his 1976 text) and Fish represent for English studies (i.e., valuing only literature and nothing else) is "generational" in many departments, including my own. Faculty members who were educated in English studies from the mid-1980s on (in my own department, this would include all of our assistant professors and most of our newer associate professors) have almost all taken graduate courses in composition theory and practice, often required as preparation for teaching assistantships, and they emerged into the discipline of English when composition was a thriving intellectual field. On the other hand, faculty members who were educated before the 1980s (more experienced associate and full professors, including, in my own case, the chair of my department) know nothing of composition's disci-

plinary status, since, in most cases, their only encounter with writing studies has been restricted to the first-year composition courses they occasionally have to teach (or successfully avoid teaching).

23. I want to make it clear that the exclusive focus on literature that Ohmann and Fish propose for English studies is *not* what North would call corporate compromise because there simply is no compromise involved. Literature, within this limited framework, is not a discipline that manages other disciplines; instead, for Ohmann and Fish, literature is the only important discipline, and the others are treated as cavities, as problems that could have been prevented long ago, but now they're here. The only solution? Drill.

24. This question was posed to me in an e-mail message from Amy Elias, author of the "Critical Theory and Cultural Studies" chapter in this book.

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