

between that history and the literary's shifting formal conventions in their analysis of cultural production and of the conditions producing the literary.

Since form resonates with ideological implications, no student of cultural studies can afford to ignore the formal elements frequently consigned to the literary. I see a tight, mutually influential, fluid interrelation between the formal and the historical, evoked in this formulation by Bakhtin/Medvedev: "every literary phenomenon, like every other ideological phenomenon, is simultaneously determined from without (extrinsically) and from within (intrinsically)" (*The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship*, trans. Albert J. Wehrle [Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1985]). Although potentially including the literary and "every other ideological phenomenon," cultural studies must take a dialectical approach that incorporates both the intrinsic (a history of formal conventions, shifting internal textual dynamics, and the gaps or silences representing suppressed alternatives) and the extrinsic (related historical pressures, social relations, and the forces responsible for silencing alternatives).

In my work I enter this dialectic by focusing on historical theories and practices of language—a subject to which the literary, with the sensitivity to language it often encourages, has much to contribute. A cognizance of the ways in which writers and readers adhere to and resist literary traditions and of the conventional laws to which language users respond is central in establishing the significance of literary and cultural productions and determining the meaning and history of such terms as *the literary*, *norm*, and *deviant*. I give particular attention to how—and why—writers and speakers appropriate and transform dominant linguistic rules and to the ideological pressures at work in the instituting of such rules.

Drawing from a revised philology that refuses the Eurocentrism and fixed classifications of its disciplinary origins, I would also like to reclaim the analysis of language from the merely formalist approach that literary study has too often adopted. Concentrating on linguistic histories allows me to take advantage of and resituate the linguistic turn in literary studies. As Voloshinov instructs, language is both a sensitive medium and a refracting lens of the social world it inhabits and shapes. Language registers "emergent structures of feeling," to use Raymond Williams's phrase, long before they solidify and bears the traces of residual ones long after they disappear or are suppressed. When I investigate etymologies and the uses to which the study of etymology has been put, the composition and historical construction of a standard language, or the literary representation of dialect, my goal is to illuminate the social embeddedness of particular usages and theories of languages. Inasmuch as literary rep-

resentations of language both foreground and alienate it, the literary invites interrogations of the sedimentary, multivalent character of language.

One productive relation between the literary and cultural studies, then, results when the attention to language fostered by the literary is merged with a situating of linguistic practices within the sociopolitical contexts they help recast. I am especially interested in the linguistic encounters produced by empire and in what language practices reveal about strategies and tactics of literacy, cultural assimilation, and resistance. In animating the social history of the sign, that site of struggle and contestation, I stress the agency of language and, more important, of its users. If the scholarship produced by cultural studies has had a limitation, it is perhaps the field's indebtedness to literary studies: too frequently cultural studies, like literary studies before it, focuses on consumption, analyzing moments of reading—albeit resistant ones in cultural studies. Cultural studies has emphasized the operations of discourses of power but has neglected movements of resistance that reject the micropolitics of alternative consumption.

An awareness of language as production in a hierarchical social context can allow recognition of the competing views of language existing between all language users, some of whom might come together briefly and contingently to contest the powers that would empty their languages of plural or defiant senses. The socially grounded analysis offered by cultural studies, coupled with the detailed attention to language invited by the literary, has the potential to help make that consciousness possible.

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To advertise a cultural studies reading group among our faculty, Thomas A. Wilson and I formulated this definition: "Cultural studies is an inquiry into the multiplicity of cultural practices, particularly modes of discourse and representation, and into the connections of those practices to relations of power. It is based on a systematic theorization of not only the ways in which certain identities (national, social, political, gendered, ethnic, religious, linguistic, etc.) are constructed but also the uses of those identities in contestation over meaning and truth in cultural domains." That a specialist in Chinese intellectual history and a medievalist in an English department could agree on a definition of cultural studies shows one of the field's important strengths: adaptability to different disciplines.

In my teaching, I find that my desire to broaden students' perspectives through the methodologies of cultural

studies must be accorded with the demands of teaching close reading, a task that Middle English texts render more difficult. This negotiation is colored by my enjoyment of the minutiae of versification and poetic technique, an appreciation that more theoretically oriented colleagues view as a peccadillo. I fear that in the teaching of poetry, what has been lost with the advent of cultural studies is attention to literary and linguistic detail, which is too often sacrificed on the altar of contextualizing the text in a broader interdisciplinary framework.

If the analysis of poetic technique has been lost for modern English literature, it has been buried and forgotten for Middle English works. This burial has been hastened by colleagues who teach Chaucer in translation so students can concentrate on modern critical methodologies without having to deal with linguistic complexities. Ironically, however, this choice flouts the goals of cultural studies, since translators often aim to make their texts resemble colloquial modern English and thus reinforce it as the norm. When Chaucer's language looks contemporary, readers inevitably tend to make him into a modern author (a danger against which the feminist critic Elaine Tuttle Hansen effectively warns in *Chaucer and the Fictions of Gender* [Berkeley: U of California P, 1992]). Moreover, translations tend to sacrifice the elaborate commentary and critical apparatuses that explain the author's authority and thereby make Chaucer more fully available to analysis by cultural studies. *The Riverside Chaucer*, the standard Middle English text of his literary corpus, with its textual variants, explanatory notes, and glossary, teaches students not only what Chaucer was (in its biography and sections on manuscript history) but also what he is: a poet who has been read and studied for six hundred years. This knowledge is part and parcel of the academic culture of modern readers and must be open to examination if cultural studies is to be self-evaluative.

At the center of the cultural baggage in *The Riverside Chaucer* is the conventional representation of Chaucer as "father of English poetry." This phrase has been only two-thirds unpacked since cultural studies came to medieval studies. Chaucer's patriarchal place in the literary canon and his Englishness (as well as his usefulness to English nation builders) have received a good deal of attention, but his poetry as poetry has not been fully scrutinized through the lens of cultural studies. At its best, critical attention to the mechanics of poetry has never been an end in itself—it serves a larger argument, and part of that argument should assert that poetic technique functions as the cultural currency in which poets trade, giving poems some of their initial value. If readers begin to see poetic technique in this light, they confront it as an issue of language and power of the type examined by

Pierre Bourdieu, and as such the poetic elements of a poem have not only particularized instantiations within the work but also broader cultural meanings.

For example, describing the battle between Palamon's and Arcite's forces, Chaucer's Knight fills a twelve-line passage with alliteration that parodies a native poetic tradition (e.g., "With myghty maces the bones they tobreste. / He thurgh the thikkeste of the throng gan threste . . ." [2611–12]). In my Chaucer class we discuss how this alliteration reinforces the violence of the scene, particularly with plosives. Then we examine a sample of Middle English alliterative verse and peek ahead to the Parson's rejection of "rum-ram-ruf" ornamentation as inappropriate to his high seriousness. I next ask my students why Chaucer, a London poet drawing largely from Continental sources, parodies an English tradition from the provinces, and the northern provinces at that, and what it means that he bests the alliterative poets by doing what they do but in rhymed couplets as well.

Professors who teach poetry written in English should integrate the study of prosody and form into the larger goals of cultural studies. These aspects recommended the poetry to its earlier readers, giving it the authority that earned it a place in the university classroom. I hope that the revitalized examination of poetic technique will find reconfigured and therefore renewed importance in scholarly discourse.

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According to Lawrence Grossberg, cultural studies describes and mediates the discourses that relate everyday lives to the social structure (*It's a Sin: Postmodernism, Politics and Culture* [Sydney: Power, 1988] 22). Presumably, one aim of this type of cultural studies is to transform the structures of social power. Yet the many directions that the field has taken—for example, investigating scientific discourse as well as mass culture and popular entertainment—make it a broad target for criticism, distrust, and antagonism, as the controversy surrounding Alan Sokal's hoax article in *Social Text* makes clear ("Transgressing the Boundaries—Toward a Transformative Hermeneutics of Quantum Gravity," *Social Text* 14 [1996]: 217–52).

Cultural studies' relation with literary studies in the academy has often resembled that between matter and antimatter on *Star Trek*. Though they cannot touch without a universe-destroying explosion, they exist in an intimate relation that fuels the ship. It has been argued that the distinction between the literary and cultural studies serves to maintain the notion of the literary—of literature as defined by the traditional canon and by the privileging