

English department curriculum is replayed today by ethnic and postcolonial studies. Another catalyst of change is the mass media. Movies and television are by far the most influential contemporary forms of storytelling and drama. Often faculty members in English and comparative literature do much of the teaching about the narrative, dramatic, and aesthetic components of the mass media—logical extensions of literary-critical training.

A further influence, which has caused English departments to rethink and in some cases redraw their boundaries, is the recent development of rhetoric in composition as a separate area of research and teaching, bringing pressure to create rhetoric-and-composition programs independent of literature. Of course, the teaching of writing, especially freshman composition, has been a responsibility of English departments since their origin. But the activity was always relegated to the basement along with the graduate students and part-timers who now ordinarily teach composition, while the tenured literature faculty levitated to the penthouse. It isn't clear whether recent calls to reform English by emphasizing rhetoric instead of literature are defensive measures to keep the rhetoric-and-composition faculty from seceding or more-positive responses to theory and to the linguistic turn inspired by structuralism and poststructuralism. (Introducing *Rhetoric, Sophistry, Pragmatism*, Stephen Mailloux speaks of "the 'rhetorical turn' in the humanities and social sciences" [1].) As theory calls for or becomes rhetorical analysis, rhetoric encroaches on literature and threatens a carnivalesque inversion of the literature-composition hierarchy.

Faculty members who want to engage these new forces constructively often identify with cultural studies. Like rhetoric, culture has always been a category capacious enough to express many interests and arguments. But can traditional disciplines like English give cultural studies programs a positive content? Apart from the unwisdom of exporting disciplinary crises and dissatisfactions into new programs, the key words around which most cultural studies programs circulate are global and contentious. Besides *culture* and *rhetoric*, I have in mind *theory*, *discourse*, *ideology*, and *textuality*. *Semiotics* is a related term with some positive content.

Interest in Marxist theory and ideological critique, especially when applied to recent cultural phenomena and everyday life, has been the main thread connecting the work of the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies with cultural studies programs elsewhere. For cultural studies to have any coherence as a discipline or an antidiscipline, its focus must continue to be on ideology (or power and knowledge) and the social construction of subjectivity; on the politics, institutions, and products of the mass culture industries, including schools

and universities; and on what Michel de Certeau called "the practice of everyday life." As traditionally defined, literature fits into this agenda only tangentially—perhaps merely as one more ideological illusion to be critiqued, together with God, the nation-state, individualism, and "free market" (multinational) capitalism. Whatever else cultural studies may be, it isn't literary (though literature can be one of its objects of analysis). Meanwhile, it seems certain that English departments, along with other humanities and social science departments, will continue to evolve or deliquesce toward cultural studies.

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Reworkings

Cultural studies concerns itself primarily with the symbolic production and contestation of power, of individual and collective identities. It examines how people use symbolic material to construct and dispute meanings and thus to position themselves in their social topographies. Cultural studies maps culture as a site of ongoing struggles over the norms, institutions, values, and tastes that are at the core of social integration. In contrast to traditional approaches to the literary, cultural studies is interested less in textual structures and more in the various extratextual systems of signification by which cultural material acquires meaning in everyday life. Unlike the posthermeneutic exercises of poststructuralism, cultural studies seeks not to liquefy meaning altogether but to show how it is constituted, contested, and multiplied in diverse and historically contingent practices. Tracing everyday routines to find moments of empowerment and coercion, a cultural studies approach to the micropolitics of subject formation cannot do without an ethnographic component.

Many critics wrongly assume that cultural studies implies a radical turning away from the study of literary materials. Literary culture is an essential part of the force field of institutions, meanings, and practices that cultural studies takes as its object; there is no reason that the works of, say, Shakespeare or Goethe cannot be examined from a cultural studies perspective. To be sure, emerging after the great divide between autonomous art and mass culture had broken down, cultural studies does not always discriminate convincingly between materials of greater and lesser significance. It also needs to develop a greater variety of persuasive historiographic perspec-

tives in order to expand its focus beyond twentieth-century American-style popular and consumer culture.

Today many departments allow cultural studies to enter their syllabi locally but prohibit general reconsideration of their curriculums. Cultural studies, however, should not be institutionalized as an autonomous, self-sufficient track that parallels those centered on literature. It will necessarily forfeit its intellectual demands and political itineraries if it becomes reduced to an individual area of specialization alongside others. For cultural studies aims not to add yet another approach to the reading of texts but to reconsider our entire notion of the role of texts in the symbolic inventory of a specific society. In fact, despite differences in context and methodological tools, cultural studies reinvents the role that Max Horkheimer, inaugurated as the director of the Institute of Social Research in 1931, attributed to twentieth-century social philosophy: to serve as a self-reflexive theoretical activity that guides interdisciplinary research to synthetic results.

Cultural studies offers foreign language and literature departments incentives to rethink what it means to teach a foreign culture in an age of global electronic communication, massive migrancy, and transcultural hybridization. Cultural studies reminds us that the study of foreign cultures, literatures, and languages will remain a viable force only if it learns to exploit its institutional dislocation and in-betweenness as a source of insight, inspiration, and self-reflection. By tracing the ways in which modern German culture departs from the notion of culture as a unified and homogeneous reservoir of meaning, cultural studies disengages scholars and students from the ever-more-preposterous search for authentic things German. Cultural studies strives not so much to analyze or teach artifacts made in the foreign culture or solely to facilitate intercultural understanding or to overcome stereotypes and misperceptions of the other; rather, it undertakes to investigate the diverse, composite character of cultural appropriations and contestations in the target culture. Cultural studies thus calls for a different approach to the teaching of literary materials, which in the past were seen as keys to the formulation and pedagogical conveyance of fixed, homogeneous national identities. Under cultural conditions in which the experience of in-betweenness has become the norm, the primary point of teaching a foreign language can no longer be to prod students into passing as natives, as linguistic simulacra, or to equip them with the tools for appreciating the linguistic intricacies of literary texts. Instead, cultural studies views a course like German 101 as a site at which students learn how to partake of the multitude of cultural expressions and practices characteristic of the hybrid German culture today. Indeed, German 101, taught at an

American college, is part of the diverse activities that constitute contemporary German culture. If it seems that cultural studies has not yet proved how its principles can be integrated productively into the foreign language classroom, the reason may in part be the reluctance to uncouple language studies from the literary, from visions of linguistic proficiency that are based on comprehension of the stylistic registers of literary masterworks. In shifting our attention away from the hermeneutic exegesis of symbolic materials and toward the cultural practices surrounding them, cultural studies calls on students to forsake the more easily navigated world of the book and return to the material archives of everyday life—to become keen observers and well-traveled collectors. At the same time, cultural studies should avoid the kind of academic populism that exalts the archive and the everyday into the sole repositories of wisdom while disparaging the necessary work of theory and demonizing literary culture as a reactionary bastion of the elite.

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When I read and reviewed the collection *Cultural Studies* a few years ago (ed. Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, and Paula A. Treichler [New York: Routledge, 1992]), I was at once delighted by the intelligence and energy of the contributors and puzzled by their theoretical style. Usually the builders of a new field are intellectual puritans who draw safe disciplinary boundaries and establish rigorous methods. Since skepticism and the relaxation of standards are the favorite games of latecomers, I thought that the antielitist and antidisciplinary anarchism professed by cultural studies might provide a memorable exception to the rule. Turning from the research potential of cultural studies to its pedagogical promise, however, I noticed that the field does have boundaries, which coincide with those of the former British Empire and the present English-speaking world. I also realized that the practitioners of cultural studies do behave like latecomers, being irresistibly drawn to the lands that once attracted Puritan exiles, colonial conquerors, and Victorian missionaries. Within this chronological and linguistic framework, the teaching and research strategies adopted by cultural studies make full pedagogical sense. In America, England, and the Commonwealth, it is possible to teach the idiosyncratic aspects of popular and subaltern cultures, since the instructors as well as the students are familiar with the fundamentals of mainstream and higher culture by virtue of their upbringings.

But do these monolingual strategies accommodate the pedagogical needs of departments of foreign languages?