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A Field of Magpies: Disciplinary Emergence as Modus Vivendi in English Studies

Our summons to draw "Lessons from the Past: The Emergence of University English" evokes, inescapably, some prominent institutional dimensions. These deserve such careful attention at present that I must acknowledge them in starting and, although the following discussion will chiefly trace out other dimensions of the topic, must return to them in closing as well. To the extent that "University English" involves matters such as organizational authority and clout, departmental viability and adaptation, the task of an institutional analysis will be to refine and extend inquiries that peaked a quarter-century ago when a handful of talented literary scholar-critics, sniffing if not biting the hand that fed them, applied their talents to assessing the institutional structure that sustains professional study of English.[1] Especially amid the company I'm to keep in these pages, I have just enough awareness of the variance obtaining among institutional arrangements across the years and around the globe to sense how shakily I grasp even the conditions outside the USA that are best known to me, those in the UK and Canada. An aspirant to general overview who knows as little as I do about a world of anglophone institutional histories – one that embraces, most saliently, the several distinct histories comprised by Australasia – had better study silence first.

I may, however, be able to say something to the purpose if you will let me take the phrase "University English" in a sense more intellectual than institutional – something more like "academic

English" – and in the process to represent its "emergence" not as a fait accompli but as a work in progress, indeed an ongoing condition of possibility. I won't go so far as to describe this condition as *critical* (to trope "emergence," that is, as "emergency" or crisis); yet, if I did so, it wouldn't be the first time any of us had heard talk about the "crisis in English studies."[2] Talk of crisis has indeed, and oddly, been *chronic* when literary academics reflect together on their common enterprise. Reasons for this prominently include those funding patterns and hierarchies of value which policy-makers prefer to express in spreadsheet form. Conceding that such circumstances stand to the intra-disciplinary history of English studies I sketch below pretty much as global warming stands to the inventory of a distributed local habitat – pervasively, that is, and crucially – I leave that circumstantial outside story here to other minds, or at least other occasions, and turn to an inside story instead. Regarded as a symptom from a sample case in intellectual history, our persistently defining sense of crisis is partially due, I propose, to the ever-incomplete, and in all likelihood endlessly adolescent, state of English's incessant emergence as an academic discipline.

Essential background for such a claim is to be found in Thomas Kuhn's analysis of disciplinary maturation in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, that still paradigmatic study of paradigm-shifting whose fiftieth anniversary has just passed. There, as you may remember but I did not before consulting it again, among the humanities disciplines that Kuhn conscientiously if cursorily includes for discussion, only systematic theology shows promise of the degree of consolidation, and the kind of protocol development, that are exhibited by its companion on the high-priori road mathematics, or that a hard-science inductive discipline like chemistry can be seen to have attained on its coming of age around the turn of the nineteenth century (a time when the condition of English was not even infant but amniotic). This distinction of theology's, however noteworthy, is one that few of us in literary studies would wish to claim for our scholarship, or for the training we design to impart to our successors in the doctoral programs we supervise. There may be literary scholars out there who actively seek for their work the

sort of procedural rigor and coherence of cumulative advance that belong to Kuhnian scientific paradigms, but I can't see that they're attracting much notice. Absent these high criteria for disciplinarity, however, fitful initiatives of an ambition to discipline English studies are manifest here and there in its history; and they are worth a brief preliminary survey if only as limiting cases that can help us size up the field as it ordinarily operates.

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In my lifetime Northrop Frye stands nearly alone as, so to say, a systematic theologian of literary genre, form, and history. Beside Frye procedurally deliberate researcher-theorists like I. A. Richards, Norman Holland, or Lisa Zunshine might be adduced as well, yet I find it hard to mention their studies of the stock responses, subject positions and cognitive practices of readers in the same breath with the library-wide panoptical overview that Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism* takes of more works than most of us can remember, much less marshal like him into an interlocking, cross-braced, yet still generously receptive conceptual whole. In the laboratory or clinic for reading, scientistic virtues of clarity and reproducibility are purchased by a restriction of focus that is likely to strike literary minds as unpalatably austere. I suspect that the comparatively few scholars-in-training who nowadays encounter Frye's holistic vision of a self-balanced literary system find it, too, austere – albeit in a quite different sense, begotten by careerist despair upon practical impossibility – and that they are tempted to arraign its formidable vision on suspicion of mandarin aplomb. Still, nobody is about to mistake the austerity of Frye's architectural syntheses for that attending a calibration of reproducible results: if both are systematic, they are so in remotely divergent ways. The latter way now enjoys more favor with us: the procedural validity of the *finding*, whether individually wrested from a research archive or extracted, compressed, and processed from a data mine, has tended of late to supplant the elder authority of the *overview* whereby, under the consensual dispensation of a literary canon at once more coherent and

more widely accepted than is anywhere prescribed today, new readings mattered when they found a place along pre-existing generic and historical co-ordinates that charted the whole network and articulated its horizons.

The self-enforcing discipline of the whole forms a postulate conspicuous in theology, whence proceeded theology's role at the hub of the academic curriculum that was limned a century and a half ago by Father Newman in *The Idea of a University*.[3] But, as Kuhn's echelon of disciplinary maturation may imply, there is something theologically holistic as well about the hard sciences' criterion of systemic consistency (whose inertial force provides the key to understanding paradigm-shifts: both how they happen and why they happen so seldom). When I look for that loosely scientific holism among literary humanities practitioners still living, I detect it in figures as different as Franco Moretti and John Milbank. The former's literary cartography, in his "atlas" of the novel and his mapping of Balzac's Paris, Austen's England, or Conan Doyle's London, has on the face of it a conspective sweep like unto Frye's great rotary almanac of the genres. Moretti's Darwinian trees of forgotten, often literally clueless, 1890s detective stories and, a couple of orders of magnitude higher, his graphs of title-length from an unreadably vast data-base of early novels represent exemplary (in part, because seldom strikingly conclusive) experiments in the taking of long large views; his distributive conjugation of character-systems within plays by Shakespeare suggests that the Moretti method of "quantitative formalism" may harbor wider applications than one would have thought, both for freshly corroborating received answers to some old questions and for posing some new ones about masked affinities within the dramatis personae.[4] Milbank's "radical orthodoxy" in theology is the most impressive systematization of poststructuralist literary theory that I've gotten wind of; and of course his effort gets a Kuhnian shot in the arm from the association with theology itself.[5] It seems significant that Moretti at Berlin then Stanford, and a couple of decades earlier Holland at Florida, have articulated scholarly programs capable of enlisting

teamworked researchers in scholarly initiatives that, exfoliating science-like from the master plan of a principal investigator, feed results back into the colony like nutrient tribute.

I don't think it worked quite that way in Northrop Frye's Toronto, which constituted not a cottage of industry but rather a school of thought that bred a habit of mind it then turned loose to wander. As did the University of Chicago during the mid-century reign there of neo-Aristotelian schoolmen like Elder Olson and R. S. Crane. As did an embattled faction of the Cambridge school in F. R. Leavis's time. As did a two-quad neighborhood in New Haven when I was a grad student at Yale in the 1970s, the heyday of Harold Bloom, Geoffrey Hartman, Paul de Man, J. Hillis Miller, and the hermeneutical mafia.[6] From each of these schools conformities emerged, most immediately and markedly in the work done by the disciples they trained and graduated; but these conformities were short-lived because they were not *procedurally* binding, or in other words because they were bound by little beyond traditional affinity and were distinguished chiefly by the inherently unruly glamour of the individual talent. Where the ratio of charisma to method stood so very high, as it still does in our field today, the resulting work might be excruciatingly hard to succeed in, and exquisitely superb once performed with success; but the governing discipline exerted upon that work by English studies as such has been erratically personal and collectively imperceptible.

You are afraid that I, true to disciplinary form, have erratically wandered from my assignment. But no: I begin with Kuhn, and with this posse of salient exceptions to the Kuhnian rule of English's fundamentally fuzzy, messy, sub- or proto-disciplinary status, in the conviction that these figures are salient *because* exceptional. Even at its least soft edge, over on the bibliographical and editorial side of things departmentally English, we just don't seem very worried about getting one another all on the same page, ruling certain scholarly activities in and others out by the establishment of protocols governing the method of inquiry and verification of results. Again, a different kind of exception may

prove this deregulatory rule: the Text Encoding Initiative for XML markup does appear to have taken hold for a generation now, thanks to the overriding force of practical considerations hard-wired into the binary computing machines on which we now do most of our work. (See http://www.tei-c.org/index.xml.) The TEI, and with it, for citational practice, the *Chicago Manual of Style* or the *MLA Style Manual* – and which is it, by the way? an author so seldom knows[7] – prevail in English studies for the same reasons of convenience that stand behind their adoption by other scholars in the human sciences.

Such reasons find no counterpart when we turn, as it is time I did now, to review the intellectual influences that have repeatedly inflected university English. I lodge no claim for the authoritative rightness or fetching originality of any of the period "emergences" that follow. Welcoming correction in matters of detail, I solicit instead assent to the kind of narrative these sketches constitute and to the kind of pattern they add up to: a fluctuant process of opportunistic adaptation, historically discernible across the past two centuries. Since the early nineteenth century, waves of change have swept the field in sometimes overlapping series; these have now and then set up intriguing patterns of interference but have not produced, as they would have done were English a matured Kuhnian discipline, a systematic deposition in either sense of that term. My slideshow here offers neither the additivity of a stepwise or dialectical development whereby the new builds out the old, intra-paradigmatically, nor the parricidal drama of supersession whereby the paradigm undergoes a wholesale shift and the old is swiftly forgotten. We have been and remain as disputatious with each other as the day is long, but the debates that have at successive epochs defined English studies eddy and churn more than they supplant. Our waves of change are tidal not torrential, and if what they bring displays, in its very recurrency, a certain flatness of aspect, it may by the same token claim the kind of fertility we have learned to associate with the unprepossessing aspect of a wetland.

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Our first wave, in some respects our ground swell right across the centuries, is ***philological***. The continuous history of “University English” began in the 1830s when the newly founded University of London instituted the first Professorship, anywhere in the English-speaking world, of “English Language and Literature”[8] – a label that survives verbatim, by the way, in official descriptions of the department where I work today. But in that questioning interval between Regency Dilettantism and Victorian Reform the label was more truly descriptive than it is in my day. Ur-Professor Robert Gordon Latham and his London successors set the advanced academic study of English on the firmest academic basis they could find, which was the study of linguistic morphology, etymology, and syntax. When taken at full Teutonic strength, philology was queen of the early nineteenth-century sciences by reason of a rigor rivaling that in Greek and Latin studies; by reason moreover of its ethnological corollaries, and the sweeping vista they by glimpses disclosed of something that intellectuals were starting to call “culture” (Herbert 1991); and not least by reason of its humanist prestige in the critical establishment of the text of Holy Writ, which was a matter of life and death in the Protestant nations of northern Europe where scripture alone was salvific and where, not just coincidentally, philology especially flourished.[9] The first incumbents of this London professorship were ordained clergymen, and this clerical orientation imparted to their lectures an early whiff of that sanctity attending the study of the word which has more or less clung to English studies ever since.[10]

Of such pieties more than a whiff inspired the next, properly Victorian wave of influence, which I’ll call for want of a better term the ***seminarian***. By it I mean the combination of exegetics, hermeneutics, homiletics, and canon-formation in which Victorian reflection on literary education was by and large steeped, and of which the most distinguished practitioner was Matthew Arnold. I no sooner name Arnold in this capacity than I blush to withdraw the nomination, because of the classicist purity with which he staunchly opposed the suitability of English, or any living vernacular, as a subject of

study at the tertiary level. Yet the fact remains that no one from the nineteenth century exerted a more decisive influence than Arnold on twentieth-century academic English. It was he who most memorably brought the neoclassical paideia of rhetoric forward from the eighteenth-century teaching tradition that had produced his clergyman-headmaster father, and that had been codified in Glasgow (Blair 1783) and trained on anglophone texts (the northerner the better). This rhetorical tradition of ethos-formation Matthew Arnold bred up into a civic utility of remarkably broad application. Literary education was a therapeutic technology for addressing numerous crises specific to Victorian times, ranging from the anarchy attendant on an industrially accelerated reorganization of the British class structure (*Culture and Anarchy*, 1869), through the recession of religious orthodoxy under increasingly free-thinking philological scrutiny (*Literature and Dogma*, 1873) to the mounting yet unpredictable prestige of a scientific worldview ("Literature and Science," 1882). The formal resemblance among those three titles just parenthetically adduced is not more striking than the fact that "and," in each of them, means "versus." While the first term in each pair claims Arnold's advocacy, on heading into the controversialist fray he dares not back it as the favorite; indeed, his argument presupposes that literature or culture must come from behind if it means to subdue anarchy or dogma or science, and that its success will involve in equal measure the guerrilla's cunning in resource and the middleman's patience in negotiation.

Literary education on Arnold's terms offered at once a regimen of self-perfection and a means of managerial social planning; and a balance was struck between these inward and outward domains by the aesthetic cultivation of sympathies that study of the best literature would promote. Such a synthesis proved viable in Victorian England only because the ground had been laid for it earlier elsewhere, in what hindsight promotes for attention as prescient acts of upland and offshore outsourcing. A hundred years before Arnold launched his mid-Victorian program from an Oxford Professorship – and, notably, in precedent-breaking English rather than the traditional Latin ("On the

Modern Element in Literature," 1857), although his prime exemplar of modernity was still Virgil – the young Scottish professor Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) had called on the sympathetic literary imagination to curb the destructive energies of capitalist self-interest. And, during the intervening century, school authorities in India and in Ireland had instituted an English literature curriculum for the indigenous population, exercising a spirit of colonial engineering that, in effect, pioneered modes of role-shaping and behavior-modification that the nineteenth-century identification of "culture" with pedagogy would furnish ample reasons for repatriating, once the Second Reform Bill (1867) and Forster Education Act (1870) made mass democracy a going concern.[11]

Arnold was the man who brought such an enterprise home to harbor in England, and who breathed into literary study so effectively missionary a spirit that in three last books he converted the Bible itself to the new and secular literary faith. "The strongest part of our religion to-day is its unconscious poetry": so Arnold declared in an 1880 essay, "The Study of Poetry," which in effect legitimated his program on an anglophone basis, by including English instances beside quotations from Homer and Dante among its authenticating "touchstones" of poetic excellence.[12] Meanwhile old-school philology persisted across the century, both within the university curriculum and beyond it in a public sphere where books on language by Bishop R. C. Trench and Professor F. Max Müller educated a wide lay readership. Whether in the Victorian academy or out, the most conspicuous philological work exploited a culturally pervasive association between English and Englishness, which linked language and literature, on one hand, to nationality and character on the other. Thus W. W. Skeat's editions of *Piers Plowman* (1886) and Chaucer (1894) shared a mission with James Murray's Oxonian yet para-academic *New English Dictionary* (1884-) and with F. J. Furnivall's amateur and free-lance New Shakspere Society (1873-), where rhyme-counts and stress-tests of the hardest-headed sort were ultimately held to the test, not so very distant from the quality-controls vested in Arnold's touchstones, of soulful communion with the sublime development of a national genius.

The pastoral charge that the nineteenth century thus laid on the rising twentieth – foster literary sensibility as if your soul depended upon it – fed into a large fund of cultural capital from which the first literature-based English departments and professional organizations were able to draw liberally in the years on either side of 1900. As an emphasis on taste and sympathy led to the exquisite refinement and bold exploration of complex or extreme states of mind in Victorian poetry, then in Aesthetic, Decadent and Modernist writings across the genres, an influential wave of ***psychology*** was levied for new terms in which such developments might be brought to order for academic understanding. The cosmopolitan science of mind as advanced abroad by William James, Henri Bergson, Benedetto Croce, and with gradually increasing pre-eminence Sigmund Freud and his psychoanalytic disciples equipped adventurous-minded English critics with vocabularies for the appreciation and analysis of fictional characters, and of lyric moods and orientations, within not just contemporary writing but a swiftly consolidated, and duly international, canon of traditional authors and works. By precept and example I. A. Richards (1924) and William Empson (1930) honed to great keenness explicit and ad-hoc "principles" of criticism whose discipline (in its ascetic, not Kuhnian meaning) invited students of all academic ranks to know themselves anew, to theorize their own minds, through unprecedented scrutiny of literary language.

The practice and explication of such scrutiny in the sense that gave the journal *Scrutiny* (1932-53) its name, under the leadership of F. R. Leavis, required these psychological subventions from the philosophy of mind, but it required something else besides. That was the infusion of ***social science*** perspectives that came into English studies as the hungry 1930s quickened and to some extent polarized the entire literary domain. Marxist explanatory categories and formulae became known in effect among anglophone scholars, though not widely advertised in name; studies in fiction witnessed a flowering that was newly attentive to socio-economic determinants, and this at a time when even well to the right of Marxism the more conservative, nonpartisan students of the canon tended to devote their labors to the

historical and contextual bearings of literature's contents, enlisting literary works with a view less to language and form than to what representative genres represented, and within what enabling, socially encoded networks they circulated. (Here we find that older historicism to which, half a century later, the catchphrase New Historicism, properly understood, owed its epithet.) Leavisites on either side of the Atlantic took it as their task, as they set to work in however eclectic and instrumental a fashion on Melville or George Eliot or Wordsworth, to combine social-scientific perspectives with those derived from the elder philosophy of mind that the new perspectives were tending to supersede.[13] And it was this combination – most typically expressed as a hard-won moral idealism toughened by acquaintance with spheres of experience lying well outside traditionally privileged social domains – that afforded Leavisite mavericks such persistent traction within lower echelons of higher education well into the twentieth century.

More or less concurrently in America the post-war New Criticism founded intrinsicist English studies on an ideal of textual autonomy whose theoretical grounding, implicit or overt, took the form of a repudiation of contextualist "fallacies." Yet the close textual readings actually produced by New Critics poached in practice more sensibly, and more often, on matters of context than their official program would have us suppose. Read as a manifesto, Cleanth Brooks's *The Well-Wrought Urn* looks for all the world like the declaration of a paradigm shift in literary interpretation; read chapter by chapter, though, its tactfully eclectic criticism draws once more on the rich sedimentary slush fund that was, however undisciplined and immethodized, the undulant discipline's chief bequest. In a way entirely characteristic of the field history I am breathlessly summarizing here, it was practice rather than theoretical preachment that left the deeper-pocketed legacy. On either side of the Atlantic, and indeed by mid-century in anglophone universities the world over, whether confessed or suppressed the dialectics of text and context would in different permutations continue to vex English studies, and enliven them too, right on into our time.

Institutional cases in point for the vitality of these competing claims greet us in the mid-century rise of interdisciplinary ***hybrids*** between literature and history like American studies and Victorian studies. If my own long seasoning within the latter field entails by now some responsibility of custodial oversight, I fear I can discharge it no better than by remarking how the academic investigation of Victorian culture at one and the same time has thriven on an interdisciplinary mixed diet (historical protein buffering complex literary carbohydrates) and has quite failed to articulate, much less settle on, protocols for adjudicating the art or music or political historian's claims with those of the literary critic. Eclecticism has been our laissez-faire modus vivendi, even as custom-built synthesis rolled out on reinvented wheels has been our characteristic triumph. As a rule, if that is the word for it – and strictly speaking it isn't – we Victorianists recurrently borrow from an abundant and heterogeneous archive contextual reinforcement for literary exegeses, whose mystified origination in the humanist's age-old solo encounter with primary texts we finesse, where we can, by discourses on method that make the rehabilitation of old ways look precariously, and always only temporarily, new. It's the ad-hoc nature of all this that most deserves stressing, and that emerges in another aspect when we consider the brilliant, errant paladins whom the mid-century dispensation of English studies cast up for admiring emulation. Kenneth Burke, G. Wilson Knight, Lionel Trilling all reckoned themselves – as did Leavis and as, for that matter, did Arnold – outside the establishment; and precisely on the basis of that reckoning attracted a cadre of distinguished adherents. For what they offered were idiosyncratically pungent versions of what, on a larger view, was disciplinary business as usual: the mixing and matching of categories for literary approach, imported by and large from outside the field, that the previous hundred years happened to have made available.

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Let me make the point about English's perennially emergent eclecticism once again, by direct personal testimony. The literary training that awaited me as an undergraduate in the 60s might be thought of, without gross distortion, as an ontogeny that recapitulated the disciplinary phylogeny just hazarded above in outline, and that did so in modular patchwork if not quite in reverse. The field when I got to it summoned entrants to the practice of a searchingly detailed verbal interrogation, diversified by panoramic views of the cultural and historical surround of the text in hand, and delivered with a certain artisanal sprezzatura. It bestowed its garlands, such as they were, in recognition of a mastery of nuances of gesture and posture (the author's of course, but the critic's too) that bespoke a modern turn of mind. The cultivation of this critical sensibility may well have been a pleasure, but it was certainly a duty first, a still recognizable Victorian spiritual discipline in secular clothing; and it was underwritten by a vocation whose basic equipment remained the tools of the comparative and analytic philologist. Yet even to frame the matter thus is to make the multi-disciplinary congeries of Romantic, Victorian, Modernist, inter-war and Cold-War requisitions look a lot more systematically and logically coherent than it was, in my half-conscious experience of it at the time or, to tell the truth, at our end of the day in cool retrospect.

That was the sixties, when, as products of the era like me never tire of asserting, everything changed. Within literary studies the terms of naïve eclecticism changed, all right, and they changed durably; during the last quarter of the twentieth century, half-conscious experience was not half good enough. Whatever else the ascendancy of theory effected in English studies after 1970, it made us all aware, in a way without collective precedent, of the axiomatic bases and methodological presuppositions on which our business got transacted. Structuralism systematized the apprehension of literary form on foundations that spread, for example in the ***anthropology*** of Claude Lévi-Strauss, to embrace cultural texts of much broader than verbal sorts – even as they reached back via Russian formalism and the Prague school of ***linguistics*** to revive the discipline's old philological root system.

These coordinate developments promised, for a structuralist moment that might have caught Kuhn's notice had it arrived a decade sooner, to furnish grounds of real consolidation if not synthesis across the human sciences.[14] But the devil was in the details, with their notorious recalcitrance to theoretical subsumption, and also in the hair-trigger dialectical habits that leave people in English departments so prone to whiplash as the vane of intellectual fashion spins. On structuralism's heels came a soi-disant poststructuralism, whose origin in areas of phenomenological ***philosophy*** that Anglo-American thought had by and large neglected gave the cachet of novelty to what, under Jacques Derrida's name of deconstruction, was at bottom a radicalized but recognizable mode of analysis that excelled at teasing, I don't say tossing although you might, meaning out of words. Deconstruction at all events put paid to the structuralist vision of disciplinary synthesis. It fostered instead a "linguistic moment" in humanistic scholarship (a few long-remembering minds even thought to call the new moment "philological"), which conferred prestige on decentering, dissemination, and the principled pursuit of the local, the contingent, the differentially identity-specific.

Once theory under the aegis of poststructuralism had talked itself out of its traditional métier – generalization, or the subordination of particularity to regular pattern – English studies were free to extend asylum to special interests, and therewith to the interests of discrete singularities. The invitation was taken up by a steady stream of subfields, most prominently African-American studies, women's studies, post-colonial studies, gay and then queer studies. These were variously interdisciplinary but maintained exceptionally strong trading partnerships with English, in institutional terms to do with faculty hiring lines and office space but also in the intellectual terms that concern us here. Not only did freshly edited infusions of disregarded literature pervade, distend, and in effect break the normatively white, male, metropolitan, straight canon of writings and movements; the signal work done even on texts from that crumbling canon wielded a new lexicon of resistance and subversion. Thus for much of

the 1980s, and for the first time in my quick-stepping narrative, English was doing its liveliest learning from its own disciplinary offspring.

Cognate with these offspring were two omnibus developments that may round out our twentieth-century tale: New Historicism and cultural studies. The former school's debt to ***history*** is manifest, and yet it's less marked, methodologically speaking, than the "historicist" moniker suggests. Ask the next doctorally trained historian you meet what she thinks of some garden-variety New-Historicist argument, and you may get an unflattering earful about archival penury, slipshod method, and unsustainable ratio between the claim staked and the supporting evidence. It may be nearer the truth to say that New-Historicist methods were steadfastly, if counterintuitively, literary: at least once its practice had become business-as-usual in the 1990s, New Historicism tended to impress cherry-picked facts into the service of an argument whose procedures for correlating text with context remained in heavy debt to those that English studies had set in place decades earlier for dealing with constituent elements of text: analogy, synecdoche, and so forth. As for cultural studies: while the panache of its breathtaking bricolage (good or bad) can make the magpie of English look dovelike by comparison, in the main cultural studies borrows its outlook and toolkit from anthropology and ***sociology*** among established disciplines. Unless, that is, on balance the commerce is really flowing the other way: perhaps the cultural-studies movement will look to future historians like an offshoot of synchronic social sciences, which around the millennium grafted (back) onto their own stock a set of adaptations that had been incubated in English departments to new heights of interpretive refinement.

At the same time, the predilection within cultural studies for the processes and outputs of popular and mass culture disposes it towards another of literary studies' emergent disciplinary scions. This one, ***media studies***, is in my opinion no casual by-blow but heir presumptive to the English throne. And here, lest I seem the agent of deans enforcing departmental consolidations with a predatory eye on

the budgetary bottom line, I had better reiterate my intention that these pages should privilege the operation of ideas over the work of institutions. In forecasting that media studies will one day succeed English studies as we have known it, I speak from the armchair as an intellectual rather than institutional historian. My reasons for this prediction stem from the core of what we do as readers and writers, as critics and theorists and literary historians. I derive my prediction, that is, from essential practices that on one hand define us – being, as they are, the perennial deposit left by our disciplinary history in its unprogressive ebb and flow – while on the other hand they are in process of being overtaken, not abolished but transformed, by a change as momentous as any the field has witnessed.

For most of the twentieth century photography and phonography, and especially their offspring in radio, film, and television, posed intriguing alternatives to written media, but in professional terms these were strictly optional: a traditionally inclined scholar like me might dabble in them ad libitum but also remained free to pass them by. Those decades are gone: a medial tipping-point has been reached of seismic dimensions, with the computer invasion and the supervention of digital on print media in every aspect of our work. I have in mind something more, and more important, than the way scholars in English departments now communicate with their students, with each other, and with themselves – as I am doing right now, in busy interior dialogue abetted by screen-projected word-processing. I mean rather to underscore how profoundly the proliferation of digital texts has denaturalized that printed medium which many of us within living memory took for granted as the natural place of "English language and literature" ("language" as an object of study being nearly always fixed for that purpose, even on our linguistic flank, in writing of some sort). The denaturing or disestablishment of print as scholarly habitus on one hand creates seats at the table of English studies for those alternative media of voice, image, and narrative that I just listed; on the other hand, it marks the book, the page, the paragraph as alternative media themselves, suddenly visible where they once were transparent, and soliciting that renewed and imaginative attention which Marshall McLuhan (who cut his own disciplinary

teeth, be it remembered, on Victorian poetry) enjoined on us when he declared that the medium was the message (McLuhan 1951, 1964). The materiality of books and paper, the visual prostheses that extend our living space as far as the electronic eye can see, secondary *and* primary orality as coded modes of record-keeping and creative interaction: all these now matter with new urgency to English studies – or media studies, or digital humanities, or literobotics, or whatever the cloudy twenty-first-century destiny of the field once so-called may lead our grandchildren to name it once we are gone.

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This emergent development, I repeat – resting my case and changing my hat to exit – is entailed upon us, in the first instance, on sheerly intellectual grounds. That it harbors institutional consequences, and that we need to anticipate these on sheerly political grounds within the chronically convulsed academic setting we inhabit, are propositions it would be irrational to deny and foolhardy not to act on. The media studies that constitute English studies' future is an as-yet-undefined area, whose tentative groping towards a probably unattainable Kuhnian disciplinarity we are ideally placed to estimate, and also therefore to influence. We have an obvious, vital, and leverageable stake in the outcome of a complex of pending transformations, touching alike on libraries, classrooms, and venues like this journal, which passive default on our part will relinquish into the hands of corporate and bureaucratic interests whose indifference or hostility to scholarship and criticism has shadowed our disciplinary history all along. A real say in this outcome is essential; a controlling interest would be very nice indeed, and should not be despaired of in advance.

Attaining and maintaining a significant vantage on the future of our field will oblige us to feather our magpie nest yet again, by adopting an ***archaeology*** of the texts we work on. By "the texts we work on" I mean both those we study and those we produce. By "archaeology" I mean a humanist new science in Vico's sense that we can only know that which we have made: a science comprising one part

Foucault, one part Belzoni (Egypt), Layard (Assyria) and Schliemann (Troy), and one part vouchsafed in good faith to the inscrutable Ancient of Days. The changing function of the ever-emergent field that we till will, I predict, remain codependent with the different forms, genres, and media on which we bring the discipline of a scrupulously educated attention to bear. The chief contributions that literary training can offer to the networked interdisciplinarity of this century are a sharpened eye for resemblances (and, since it doesn't quite go without saying, for the difference that grounds resemblance – and likewise that resemblance grounds); a well-stocked ear for echoes, counterpoints, alllusions, and the stratification and polyrhythmia of change both within texts and among them; a feel for the mutual ingredience of details and wholes. Instinct within each of these acquirements, and critical to the power of them all, abides a rooted conviction that the means whereby meaning gets conveyed are integral to that meaning, which therefore shifts when they do. A media studies that centrally embraces this conviction will know – if we teach it how, and who possesses the lesson plan if we don't? – to make ample room in its ever-ramified digital archive for oral and literary texts, and also for the nuances of analysis, interpretation, and theory that the conviction entrains. It will remember these nuances not as a superseded curiosity of disciplinary history but as a matter of daily exercise, as essential articles within a practice of cultural transmission carried forward from the score of decades we have been considering here. An archaeology of the future? I can live with that: in my beginning is my end. Our hosts have said it already: lessons from the past.

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[1] The following books, which appeared within a decade of each other, differ in national and historical focus but share a sibling resemblance: Baldick 1983, Vanderbilt 1986, Graff 1987, Small 1991, Court 1992, Robbins 1993. A generation back behind this band of brothers stand Ohmann 1976 and Palmer 1965; a generation nearer to us stands Newfield 2008, whose history taps a wedge into the "culture

wars" campaign that "crystallized in the late 1980s" (p. 267), i.e. when the cluster of titles just listed was coming out.

[2] English 2012 provides valuable supplementation of perspective on the historically chronic nature of our interminable "crisis," and an impressive amount of current information about a range of institutions in the nations just alluded to, and South Africa and China besides: see especially part 3, "The Future of the English Curriculum: Literary Studies in its Global Aspect."

[3] Newman 1960: see especially Discourses 2, 3, and 4 on theology and the rationale of the curriculum.

[4] This Shakespearean discussion, originally published 2011 in *New Left Review*, appears in the chapter on "Network Theory, Plot Analysis" from Moretti, 2013 (pp. 212-30). *Hamlet* is the chief exhibit, but the chapter maps as well the character-systems disclosed by scenic analysis of *Lear* and *Macbeth*. Also pertinent here are Moretti's emphasis on the way quantitative "findings," susceptible of such operations as "multivariate analysis," yield an encouragingly "falsifiable criticism" (pp. 63-4).

[5] See Milbank 1991, 1997, 1999; also the newly founded online journal *Radical Orthodoxy: Theology, Philosophy, Politics.*

[6] This last phrase is not mine, of course, but William H. Pritchard's, who was my undergraduate mentor at Amherst College shortly before the appearance of his 1975 review of critic-theorists at Yale. The timing of that review essay, catching me neatly between two schools, obliged me to see that Amherst English constituted a school of thought too, less conspicuous but not without rhizomatic influence on and among its alumni loyalists, and thus perhaps representative of a further-flung diaspora of attitudes

that may, in locally clustered practice, perform certain disciplinary functions within a field whose constitution is as yet, in Kuhn's sense, sub-disciplinary. See Varnum 1996; Sofield and Tucker 1998.

[7] The jury of journals is decidedly out on this question, even or especially within the rarer precincts of high scholarly prestige. *PMLA* 128 (2013) 5 calls for "Submissions, prepared according to the *MLA Style Manual and Guide to Scholarly Publishing*, and uses endnotes. *Critical Inquiry* speaks instead of footnotes and, to nobody's surprise, specifies "*The Chicago Manual of Style,* 16th edition" (http://criticalinquiry.uchicago.edu/info/submissions). Our masthead at *New Literary History* reverts, or advances, to endnotes but then says with a concessive sigh over editorial realities that "Chicago style is preferred": *NLH* 44 (2013) ii. And the journal you are now reading customizes things more explicitly: "authors will be asked to apply *MLQ*'s style guide and *The Chicago Manual of Style*, sixteenth edition" (http://depts.washington.edu/mlq/acceptance/style.php).

[8] This event had been long anticipated by John Tompson's appointment at Göttingen in 1762 as professor ordinarius of English, which he taught as a foreign language with the help of his 1737 anthology of *English Miscellanies* in prose and verse, which was likewise the first of its kind.

[9] Clark 2006 splices parallel histories of English and German universities between the Baroque and the modern epoch.

[10] On the nineteenth-century clerical-professorial nexus see Christine Krueger's "Clerical" chapter in Tucker 1999; and McKelvy 2007.

[11] Viswanathan 1989; while Akenson 1970 stresses the reformers' losing battle to hold a nonsectarian line within the Irish system set up in 1831, his curricular census (p. 231) shows that two books devoted to "the British poets" had entered the lists before 1850 – fully two decades in advance of the institution of national education in Britain, which was importing Irish national schoolbook primers as early as 1836.

[12] By "poetry" in this manifesto Arnold means what we mean by "literature ," though admittedly all his ensuing examples are in, and are evaluated as, verse: "The future of poetry is immense, because in poetry, where it is worthy of its high destinies, our race, as time goes on, will find an ever surer and surer stay. There is not a creed which is not shaken, not an accredited dogma which is not shown to be questionable, not a received tradition which does not threaten to dissolve. . . . The strongest part of our religion today is its unconscious poetry." One reason why these words reverberate as they do is that Arnold quotes them, slightly altered, from a slightly earlier essay of his own (1879): see Arnold 1961, p. 574.

[13] See e. g. Matthiessen 1941, Leavis 1948, Bateson 1950. The preface to Bateson's second edition (1966) aptly charts the late 1940s course he had meant to follow: "to humanize the great English classics through a sympathetic understanding of the original context, public and private, which had made them possible – neither cut off from their social roots and historical background (as the American 'New Critics' were then demanding), nor overloaded with moral 'values' (as the *Scrutiny* group tended to do)" (pp. ix-x).

[14] The following appeared in English within half a decade of each other: Propp 1958; Roman Jakobson, "Closing Statement: Linguistics and Poetics," in Sebeok 1960 (pp. 350-77); Lévi-Strauss 1963.

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