Interdisciplinary Studies

Giles Gunn

In the strict sense of the term, interdisciplinary studies is not a "field." Even if many scholars and critics think of themselves as participating in interdisciplinary studies, they do not, by virtue of this understanding, share anything like a set of interests, methods, or problems. What they share, instead—for want of a better term—is a predisposition to pursue their questions into areas of critical inquiry that cannot be mapped at all by the cartographic practices of contemporary disciplines or that can be mapped only when one redraws the critical coordinates supplied by those disciplines. Either way, students of interdisciplinary studies are marked by their willingness not simply to challenge, but also to cross, traditional disciplinary boundaries. Their hope, or at any rate their assumption, is that important dimensions of human experience and understanding lie unexplored in the spaces between those boundaries or the places where they cross, overlap, divide, or dissolve.

These practices involve risks of several kinds. The first relate to the disciplinary structure of the university system itself, at least in the United States, and the possibility that attempts to question its territorial boundaries and experiment with changing them may look like subversive activities. These risks are particularly high for junior scholars who lack the protection of tenure but possess the creative impatience necessary to the continuing development not only of the university but also of any particular field. Youthfulness—or, rather, inexperience—often entails a second kind of liability for interdisciplinary study. To bring two or more disciplines into significant interaction with one another requires considerable mastery of the subtleties and particularities of each, together with sufficient imagination and tact, ingenuity and persuasiveness, to convince others of the utility of their linkage. Such mastery, and the finesse that must accompany it, is not often acquired quickly or without extensive research and reflection. In rapidly changing fields such as the natural and physical sciences, where the bulk of graduate education is devoted to the state of the art of particular discipline or subdiscipline, interdisciplinary reconstructions of methods and subject areas can—and often must—occur quite swiftly, but in the humanities, where one can scarcely learn the state of the art of any discipline without acquiring considerable knowledge of its history, they occur more slowly. It would be a mistake, however, to suppose that boundary-crossing is either an infrequent practice in humanistic studies or a recent one.

The humanistic practice of interdisciplinary excursions into foreign territories goes all the way back in the West to classical antiquity, when Greek historians and dramatists drew on medical and philosophical knowledge, respectively, for
closely to the reconception of their own material. It has continued down to our own time, where much social thinking has been "refigured," to use the coinage of the cultural anthropologist Clifford Geertz, by encouraging social thinkers from a variety of disciplines to explore analogies between their own material and such aesthetic activities as play, ritual, drama, symbolic action, narrative, speech acts, games, and writing ("Blurred Genres"). In the Middle Ages, literary study put itself in the debt of systematic theology in its theories of interpretation and language. In the Renaissance, or early modern period as it is now called, the theologians, philosophers, and scholars known as the "humanists" differentiated themselves as a semiprofessional class by adopting, over against the medieval scholastics, the movement known as the Enlightenment, in the eighteenth century, could be easily described as a raid by the philosophers on the conceptions and methods of the physical sciences, and what we call nineteenth-century humanism is only another term for what might be thought of as the intellectual appropriation, by fields such as theology, philosophy, literature, and the fine arts, of biological and organic metaphors drawn from the natural sciences.

But if there is nothing unusual about humanists conducting so-called "disciplinary" territory (students of comparative literature have made a virtue of such necessities), there is nonetheless something distinctive and exciting about the modern interest in such cross-field and cross-disciplinary investigations. This has to do with the reasons why, and the ways in which, contemporary literary scholars and critics have permitted such calls to redefine both their subject matter and the kinds of questions they put to it. That is to say, the interdisciplinary move to explore the fields of Bernard Williams, and Hilary Putnam, and now being developed by, among others. Wayne Booth and Martha Nussbaum. An outgrowth of an ancient interest in the relations between literature and the sciences of natural science, and a renewed interest in such issues of natural science, and a renewed interest in such issues of discipline, interdisciplinary inquiries proceed from the complementary question about how the insights of some discipline or other might be remodeled our understanding of the nature of literature and, conversely, about how literary conceptions and approaches can remodel our conception of the unified field and its subject matter.

An excellent example can be found in the emerging field of ethical criticism, first explored by moral philosophers like Iris Murdoch, Michel Foucault, Bernard Williams, and Hilary Putnam, and now being developed by, among others. Wayne Booth and Martha Nussbaum. An outgrowth of an ancient interest in the relations between literature and the sciences of natural science, and a renewed interest in such issues of natural science, and a renewed interest in such issues of discipline, interdisciplinary inquiries proceed from the complementary question about how the insights of some discipline or other might be remodeled our understanding of the nature of literature and, conversely, about how literary conceptions and approaches can remodel our conception of the unified field and its subject matter.

In The Fragility of Goodness and Love's Knowledge, Nussbaum in particular is concerned to revise both tropes by arguing, first, against too academic, moral philosophers, that certain concepts of the good life, art history, and social, are not fully or adequately represented in forms of abstract and affective as traditional philosophical discussion; and, second, against many literary critics and theorists, that the concept of the good life against the concept of the good life represents a split in the idea of a subject and its object.
become a historical force in their own right and operate like any other material.

It has lately been claimed that the American studies movement failed because it never led to the creation of separate departments of American literature, but the claim amounts to measuring the success of an interdisciplinary field in terms of whether it achieves full institutional recognition by various fields if success is at last partially redefined (Coller & Grill 211)

The success of the American studies movement derives, rather, from the number of separate undergraduate programs and majors it has generated in the United States and the world, the kinds and quality of graduate programs it has produced, the new areas of research it has opened up, the professional associations it has sponsored, and, most important, the creativity, integrity, and resilience of the scholarship produced in its name. Judging by these standards, American studies has been as efficacious an interdisciplinary initiative as any undertaken in American higher education in the postwar period.

But this only indicates how difficult it is to demarcate precisely where, and how, to draw the boundaries not only between different kinds of interdisciplinary studies but also within them. For example, feminist criticism, like cultural critique or African American postcolonial criticism, is more of a comparative methodological site where other interdisciplinary modes cross and recross—reader-response criticism, semiotic analysis, psychoanalytic psychoanalytic, ethnic studies, cultural anthropology, gender studies—than a unitary mode of interdisciplinary study all its own. Furthermore, there are sharp and sometimes seemingly incommensurable differences between and among, say, feminist critics or whether to organise their research around biological, psychological, cultural, or linguistic models. What this suggests, to repeat, is that interdisciplinary studies may not refer to anything as specific or unified as a "field" in itself so much as to a predisposition to view all fields as potentially vulnerable to re-creation in the partial image of some other or others. This, in turn, renders the field to question what Roland Barthes calls "transversals," whose reconfiguration seeks to recover or uncover meanings that their formerly configured relations tended to blur, camouflage, or escape ("From Work to Text" 75).

THE THEORY OF INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES

As numerous students of interdisciplinarity in all fields can attest, the process of converting disciplines into transversals can be not only disrupting but also potentially violent. When the parameters of traditional fields grow permeable or suspect under the pressure of questions that, as presently constituted, they cannot address, such fields grow ripe for infiltration, subversion, or outright assault. Such military metaphors may seem excessive, but they are apt. When the academic field now called anthropology first attempted to carve out a space for itself between history and sociology, it was described by one of its proponents,
INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES

and not altogether inaccurately, as "a disciplinary poisoning license." Thus images of encroachment, trespass, offense are inescapable. Interdisciplinary studies risk disciplinary transgression in the name of interdisciplinary independence, disciplinary revisionism in the name of interdisciplinary emancipation and creativity (Fish, "being Interdisciplinary" 15-21).

But the ideology of interdisciplinary freedom captures only those aspects of interdisciplinarity's notable other. There is another side to interdisciplinary practice that, according to some, is by contrast peremptory, juridical, prescriptive, and imperialistic. This threat derives from the fact that the reductive impulse of interdisciplinary studies almost necessitates discipline in a position of subordinating to another. As a result, the subordinated discipline is not only besieged but threatened with subsumption in an anomalous, substitutionary structure that on the pretext of situating itself, as the prefix inter implies, between the two more traditionally constituted matrices, actually manages to incorporate them both in some larger hegemonic framework. Whether one constructs the new interdisciplinary formation as merely a product of the querist of the other two, or as itself a metadiscipline beyond them, seemingly matters scarcely at all. A new field has been produced, the imperiousness of whose procedures often runs counter to the defenestration heuristic used to justify it. Thus if interdisciplinary is most often legitimated in the name of greater intellectual autonomy and openness, the transdisciplinary exploration of sanctions posesses the capability of making another form of metadisciplinary despotism. Barthes writes:

"Interdisciplinary work is not a peaceful operation: it begins efficaciously when the solidarity of the old discipline breaks down—a process made more violent, perhaps, by the polemics of fashion—to the benefit of a new object and a new language, neither of which is in the domain of any branch of knowledge that one calmly sought to confine. . . . There now arises a new object, one attained by the displacement or overwriting of previous categories."

(From "Work to Text" 73-74)

Barthes defines this new mutational object as the text, arguing that it displaces or overwrites the old "Newtonian" concept of the "work." By "text" Barthes means to refer less to a specifiable entity than to a site of intersection of productive and repressive acts. It is a site of transgression, of structures with another, still more encompassing and dominant is by no means shared by all scholars. What looks to Barthes like a monolithic metadiscipline rising from the impenetrable subversion and partial fusions of two others appears to another group of scholars more like the incorporation of strategies, methods, and queries that acquire their particular sense of authority from what the two disciplines on which heretofore they had traditionally drawn

have customarily dismissed, repressed, or occluded. I cite but two examples. Feminist studies, at the chapter by Naomi Selver in this volume suggests, arose initially as protest against the stereotypic treatment of women in the literature written by men and sought to recuperate the very difference representations that women had furnished of their experience in their own writing. In like fashion, the successive stages of African American criticism—from its inception in the Black Arts movement of the 1960s to its attempt, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, to recenter social and textual boundaries in all American cultural contexts and then turn black studies into a critique of American studies generally—demonstrate, as the essay by Henry Louis Gates, Jr., in this book reveals, that African American criticism arose in part out of discoveries of what more conventional inquiries had typically omitted.

MAPPING THE INTERDISCIPLINARY TERRAIN

For purposes of this discussion, it is perhaps enough to say, then, that there is a loose historical connection between the various assumptions that literature has for some time, and in some instances for many centuries, enjoyed with other fields or structural forms: forms like painting, film, sculpture, architecture, discursive argument, dogmatic and speculative theology, social thought, music, and, now photography and the law; fields like jurisprudence, linguistics, anthropology, sociology, aesthetics, philosophy, religion, science, history, and politics—and the development of at least some interdisciplinary approaches to such relations. But this mixture needs to be enlisted to the base. These developments have not followed an orderly pattern; they are by no means fully descriptive of all the fields with which literature has possessed important conceptual and methodological relations, and they are related closely, as might be expected, to developments in literary and critical theory as well as to the emergence of new modes of generality and intertextuality, particularly as they apply to the concept of culture itself. More exactly, genuinely interdisciplinary modes of study have usually developed through the crossing, displacement, or alteration of the boundaries between forms of relational study, or have otherwise constituted themselves in the spaces between those forms as attempts to understand the asymmetric relations between the protocols and processes of signification.

As a case in point, deconstruction arose as a joining of the philosophical interest in the critique of Western metaphysics and the new science of linguistics that in Ferdinand de Saussure's view that interdisciplinary always supplants one sign and composed signs that can be differentiated as to function: the material means of transmission or acoustic image of any sign is known as the signifier, the conceptual image or intellectual referent of sign as the signified. The relation between signifier and signified is what becomes the object of scholars and critics rather than his or her perception of the ineradicable difference—as in the words differing and differing—between them, and the inevitable suppression, repression, and...
disenchantment of meaning to which it leads. Often misdescribed as a method or critical theory, its chief aim, according to its founder and best-known exponent, Jacques Derrida, is to deconstruct all the classical oppositions on which literary criticism (like theology and philosophy) is based—between word and referent, language and being, structure and process, text and context—in order to see what such oppositions have traditionally veiled or disguised. By contrast, the new historicism, discussed in depth by Annelise Peterson in this book, has taken up methodological residence somewhere between deconstruction's preoccupa-

with the conflicting, if not self-canceling, forces of significance in any text and the neo-Marxist fascination with how processes of transformation not only reflect material circumstances and institutional patterns but frequently, and often simultaneously, generate them.

But interdisciplinary studies is sometimes formed by traversing inherited disciplinary boundaries, sometimes by transgressing them, and sometimes by exploring the spaces between them, how is one to go about mapping the studies' own permutations and forms? The simple answer is probably to be found in reverting to the set of critical coordinates that have conventionally been em-

ployed to model literary texts—the author, the material or linguistic components of the text itself, and the world to which the text refers. This model, first delineated by M. H. Abrams in The Mirror and the Lamp, has been vastly complicated in recent years as a result of each one of these coordinates has been extended, but its use can nonetheless be instructive (Hermai). Such a model helps clarify immediately, for example, that much of the activity in interdisciplinary studies in recent years has been selectively focused. Because of presuppositions about the status of the author in contemporary criticism and the whole question of intellectual intention, the role has grave theoretical misgivings about the aesthetic properties of art and the role of representation generally, this model of literary work has placed a heavy emphasis on the interpretation (not to mention the production) and

of this literary model, the author and the world, than on the middle two, the reader and the work.

This selectivity is apparent everywhere. It is as visible in all the contempor-

ary variants of psychological criticism, which tends to be preoccupied with the mental and emotional states of individuals, even when such states are taken to represent trulife psychological processes in the world, as it is in social and cultural criticism. But there is a third connection among the three pairs of coordinates that is systematically neglected: the relationship of individuals to the world. This relation is often

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and aesthetics and thus encouraged interdisciplinary activities as widely varied as the aesthetics criticism of Michael Riffaterre, the poetics analysis of Jurgen Lotman, and the etymology analysis of scholars like A.J. Greimas, Tzvetan Todorov, Gerard Genette, Claude Bremond, and, now, Paul Ricoeur (see also the essay by Freiman in this volume).

But the emerging field of linguistics also promoted interdisciplinary work in areas quite distant from the study of the structure and properties of language. In one direction, it influenced the structuralist orientation that Claude Lévi-Strauss, and later Edmund Leach, brought to ethnographic studies and the development of social anthropology in general (see the essay by Boino in this volume). In another, it helped shape formalistic and generic interests that ran from the conservative, archetypal criticism represented by Northrop Frye's Anatomy of Criticism to the radical diacritical critic associated with Mikhail Bakhtin's Rabelais and His World and Todorov's The Imagination.

But the field of linguistics and its many affiliations (indeed, far more than can be enumerated here) is only one of the interdisciplinary modes of study promoted by (even as it promoted) the study of the literary commodity known as the text. To draw out the lines of interdisciplinary relation that emanate from the textual coordinate, one would have to take into account everything from the development of hermeneutics (or interpretation theory), starting with the work of Wilhelm Dilthey and Martin Heidegger through that of Hans-Georg Gadamer and Paul Ricoeur, to the new criticism of what Fredric Jameson calls "the political unconscious.

The latter has its roots in the work of Walter Benjamin and other members of the Frankfurt school (Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno), as well as in the writings of Antonio Gramsci, and its expression in the writings of critics as various as Lucien Goldmann, Louis Althusser, Raymond Williams, Pierre Macherey, and Robert Weissman (see also the essay by Marshall in this volume).

Still another way to map the varieties of interdisciplinary study would be to start with some of the new subjects it has helped make available for critical analysis—the history of the body, the psychosocial construction of the reader and the reading process; the sociology of conventions; the semiotics of signification; the historicity of representation; the ideology of gender, race, and class; intermediality; power, and powerlessness—but it would be necessary to add that each of these topics, as currently, though variously, construed, has also served both to attract and to project still further lines of interdisciplinary investigation. Studies like The Body in Pain by Elaine Scarry, for example, have woven psychoanalytic, cultural, materialistic, neo-Marxist, and new-historicist strands of disciplinary interrogation; studies of representation such as Stephen J. Greenblatt's Shakespearean Negotiations have drawn into new combinations historical, aesthetic, materialistic, semiotic, and often deconstructionist inter- and cross-disciplinary modes. But in much of the newer interdisciplinary scholarly work, the study become studies of representation. Thus the threading of disciplinary principles and practices is frequently doubled, tripled, and quadrupled, in ways that are not only mixed but, from a conventional disciplinary perspective, somewhat obscured.

So described, the overlapping, sometimes intertwined affiliations, coalitions, and alliances toward which these cartographic operations lead can become truly baffling. Furthermore, instead of as if they imply that disciplinary traditions of descent as influence always flow in one direction and in continuously visible and hence traceable chains, such mapping exercises may also become misleading, since the inevitable result of such interdisciplinary study, if not incontestable purpose, is to dispute the conventional understandings of the relations between such as origin and tensions, center and periphery, focus and margin, inside and outside.

These observations raise an obvious question about whether the simplest, or at least the most coherent, way to conceptualize the kinds of interdisciplinary studies that have emerged from relational or intertextual studies might not be to focus directly on the association, that is, literature, or rather literary study, has developed with other recognized, institutionalized fields of academic inquiry. On this basis one could simply describe the study of the literary commodity known as the text. But it is the very fact that is out of the study of, say, literature, and philosophy (phenomenological criticism, hermeneutics, deconstruction, neopragmatism, ethical criticism, the new rhetorical criticism), literature and anthropology (structuralism, ethnography, or "thick description," folklore and folk culture, myth criticism), literature and psychology (psychobalistic criticism, reader-response criticism), anxiety of influence criticism, cultural psychology), literature and politics (historical criticism, cultural studies, ideological criticism, materialist studies), literature and religion (theological apologetics, recuperative hermeneutics, generic and historical criticism, rhetoric studies), and literature and linguistics (Russian formalism, stylistics, narratology, semiotics) that has led to the born in mind is that these correlate fields (anthropology, philosophy, religious studies, psychology, etc.) have themselves changed—and sometimes dramatically—during the last quarter century, and among a variety of factors generating that instability and redefinition is the success of the particular interdisciplinary initiatives they have either stimulated or helped sustain. It is also worth noting that fewer than half the academic fields with which literature has historically enjoyed an established interface; power, and here (some of the others cited in specific chapters of Baricelli and Gilgole's Interrelations of Literature include myth, folklore, sociology, law, science, music, the visual arts, and film). Among those omitted, several, like law and science, are treated to literature's earlier beginnings, but at least one—film studies—is intimately connected to literature's comic features.

But if relational and intertextual studies have precipitated and promoted the creation of certain kinds of interdisciplinary studies, they have also discouraged the development of others. Consider, for example, the relations between literature and music. Study of the relations between literature and music goes back to the prehistory of literature itself. When verbal forms were first
embraced from their sedimentation in sound and song. This interest has taken a variety of forms over the ages, from the study of such musical elements as rhythm, rhyme, alternation, tone, voice, variation, balance, repetition, contrast, and counterpoint to the entire study of musical theory. The study of music has been a part of the curriculum at different times, and it has been the subject of much discussion among philosophers, scientists, and artists. The relationship between music and literature has been a topic of much debate, with many writers and thinkers exploring the connections between the two disciplines.

First to interpret itself on the part of many art historians, the second to the intellectual power and peculiarity of the visual on the part of many literary scholars and critics. Art historians continue to study the role of music in art, while literary scholars continue to explore the impact of visual art on literature. This relationship has been a topic of much discussion, with many writers and thinkers exploring the connections between the two disciplines.

 Critics and art historians alike have noted the many ways in which music and literature have influenced each other. For example, in the works of authors such as Beethoven, Chopin, and Debussy, music has been used to create a sense of atmosphere and mood that is reflected in the text of the work. Similarly, in the works of poets such as T.S. Eliot, music has been used to create a sense of rhythm and sound that is reflected in the visual presentation of the text.

Critical discussions of art and music have been ongoing for centuries, with many writers and thinkers exploring the connections between the two disciplines. The relationship between music and literature has been a topic of much debate, with many writers and thinkers exploring the connections between the two disciplines.

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These difficult and important questions are being vigorously contested. In addition to admitting of different and frequently conflicting answers, they are questions whose very form can be challenged as prejudicial. What they presume is that interdisciplinarity can be treated in a unified or coherent movement whose progress has typically been forward and uninterrupted, when its development seems more often to have described a course of successive, tentative, often uncoordinated forays and retreats whose progress was more crabwise than linear. Another way to put this would be to say that just as intelligent theory always holds out the possibility of unintelligent practice, as Gilbert Ryle once observed, so it is equally possible that intelligent practice can sometimes be performed in the name of unintelligent, or at least unconnected or only half-recognized, theory. If this notion tells us anything, it should confirm the fact that forms of interdisciplinarity often emerge by accident. When not driven simply by the vagaries of fashion or the metaphysics of theory, they are usually occasioned by critical circumstances and simply offer themselves as workable solutions to practical problems. In other words, interdisciplinarity is the pragmatist's response to the dilemma of disciplinary essentialism.

Yet this is not to say that interdisciplinarity can flourish in an unfavorable environment. After World War II, for example, when the pedagogues who knew the United States as the New Criticism in its full sway, interdisciplinary literary studies were in a state of noticable arrest and, where not arrested, seriously challenged by other, more formalistic and inward-looking methodologies. But the identity of interpretive refinement then epitomized by the New Criticism, or rather epitomized by its pedagogic practitioners in the schools—among its various proponents, like John Crowe Ransom, Allen Tate, R. P. Blackmur, Kenneth Burke, Cleanth Brooks, and Robert Penn Warren, there were sharp and sometimes irreconcilable differences in poetics and procedure—had had a much more deleterious effect (and still does) in England than in the United States, and even where similar prejudices were at work on the Continent, Europeans have always been more responsive to interdisciplinary initiatives than either the British or the Americans. Part of this difference stems, no doubt, from the looser departmental structure of the typical university system, and part, as well, from the role that philosophical discourse and ideas generally have traditionally played in European intellectual culture.

But generalizations like this are notoriously prone to error. The American university in the twentieth century has been surprisingly hospitable to a variety of interdisciplinary experiments without altering the way it organizes the structure of knowledge. With respect to literary study, this paradox has been explained by Gerald Graff as the result of the "field-covering principle" (6-9). According to Graff, the principle enables departments of English to retain their power and organization by welcoming new fields and methods to the fold without permitting them to challenge their established hierarchies concerning the nature and teaching of literature. The trouble with this explanation is that it may conceivably too much to the

leftist view that identifies the American university with other institutions of the corporate state and postulates that its expansion, like that of capitalism generally, derives from its ability to absorb the elements of conflict it produces. While academic institutions certainly exhibit such transformative movements as Herbert Marcuse called it, of late capitalism, it would be more accurate to say that the movement toward interdisciplinary studies has no doubt resulted from many factors, both institutional and conceptual. If the field-covering principle has proved influential in determining the way the field's intention and achievements have been perceived and assimilated, the student's temporal shift that Roland Barthes first noticed from work to text has influenced the way interdisciplinary studies has, indeed, as it can be said to possess an integrated vision at all, construed itself. The discovery of the new world of textuality and intersubjectivity has served to question a number of interpretative abstractions that controlled literary study for many decades. Among them are the following: that there is one "definitive" meaning of any text that is to be associated with the intentions of some transcendent Author; that there is any such thing as an Author, transcendent or otherwise, who is alone, or even chiefly, responsible for what a text means; that texts must be read independent of their relation, social or imperialistic, to other texts; that reading can be viewed only as a process of reception and absorption but not of production and invention; that what is significant in a text is the so-called "context." Not only has the notion of "context" been broadly-viewed to encompass things that had never been constructed as "literary" before—the experiences of women, of people of color, of members of so-called underclasses like the poor, the illiterate, and the homeless, of ethnic minorities, of regions like the South, the West, or the Northeast, and of marginalized groups like gays, the aged, and, now, thanks to the hospice movement and the awareness of AIDS, the terminally ill—it has also been constructed as a concept no less "artificial," "constructed," or "false" than that of "text" itself.

In modern literary study, the notion of "context" has been most closely associated with the notion of "culture," but in recent years "culture" has itself been radically historicized. As the concept of culture has been viewed against the background of its appearance in the eighteenth century and its transformation in the nineteenth century in response to such complex social and political developments as the rise of nationalism, the emergence of the middle class, the industrialization and urbanization of commerce, the democratization of social life, and the professionalization of the arts, it has become clear that cultures
long as it refuses to hypostatize or totalize its methodological factionation with discrepancies, divergences, disjunctions, and differences. The threat of hypostatization or totalization in interdisciplinary studies comes from one of two temptations: the first is disciplinary reductionism, or the temptation to think that the methods of one field are sufficient to interpret the materials of many. The second is the appetite for metaphorical transfer, or the attempt to treat the materials of one field as mere epiphenomena of the subjects of another. The future of interdisciplinary studies depends, of course, on avoiding such temptations. But it also depends on a number of other, more institutional and material factors, such as the availability of funds to support the development of graduate programs, centers for study, summer institutes, visiting and permanent professorships, centers for publication, interdisciplinary colloquia, and scholarships.

Chiefl among these more objective elements is the ongoing controversy within the humanities (and beyond them) about whether universities are defined as institutions devoted principally to the reproduction and transmission of culture or, rather, to the critique and re-creation of culture (Coller 33-36). While this is not a distinction anyone would have thought of thirty years ago, it now shapes much of the debate about the organization of knowledge and the politics of the academy. Within the humanities the debate centres on the nature and effect of cultural representations, and within interdisciplinary studies (if not outside) the division takes place between those who see the study of cultural representations as a political struggle over the sources and significations of power and those who view that study, instead, as a hermeneutic struggle over the hierarchies and heuristics of value. In studying cultural texts, what are we trying to do: determine how and by whom the world should be governed, or decide which values should organize our experience of it?

While these purposes are by no means unrelated, neither are they the same. The long-term challenge for interdisciplinary studies is to remain unsaddled by the tension between them without being seduced into thinking that this tension can be easily reduced or overcome. What is most productive in the current practice of interdisciplinary studies is not the utopian hope that the tension can ultimately be erased nor the complacent belief that it finally doesn't matter; what has been most productive is the inescapable fact of the tension itself and the deepened, pragmatic appreciation to which it has given rise: of how knowledge is always open to further interpretation and criticism, of how understanding is always susceptible to further correction and realization.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

It is well to remember that reflection on interdisciplinary studies possesses a long and illustrious genealogy. In the West it begins with such texts as Plato's Republic and Aristotle's Nichomachean Ethics and proceeds through Francis Bacon's Novum
Organs and Giambattista Vico's New Science to Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit, Charles Sanders Peirce's pioneering essays on the theory of signs, and Wilhelm Dilthey's Gesammelte Schriften. As we move closer to the present and confine ourselves to works that have developed general models for the reorganization of disciplinary inquiry with particular bearing on literary studies, we must make special mention of Northrop Frye's compendium of myth and archetypal criticism, Anatomy of Criticism; Hans-Georg Gadamer's magisterial study of the theory of interpretation, Truth and Method; Michel Foucault's highly influential attempt to create an archaeology of the human sciences, The Order of Things; Umberto Eco's elaboration of a theory of signs, A Theory of Semiotics; Jacques Derrida's development of the theory of deconstruction, Of Grammatology, and Pierre Bourdieu's attempt to reground the social sciences in a theory of symbolic capital and authority, Outline of a Theory of Practice.

In American literary study, interdisciplinary thinking in a number of fields has been broadly influenced by a variety of important late-twentieth-century texts. Among the most important are Roland Barthes's Writing Degree Zero, Raymond Williams's Culture and Society, 1780–1950, Claude Lévi-Strauss's Structural Anthropology, E. H. Díaz's Validity in Interpretation, Georg Lukács's Realism in Our Time, Clifford Geertz's Interpretation of Cultures, Hayden White's Metahistory, Walter Benjamin's Illuminations, Harold Bloom's Anxiety of Influence, Jacques Lacan's Écrits, Sandra M. Gilbert and Stanley Cavell's The Making of the Modern, in the Ame, John Searle's Speech Acts, Mikhail Bakhtin's Rabelais and His World and Dialogic Imagination, Paul Ricoeur's Freud and Philosophy, Edward Said's Orientalism, Sherry L. Greenblatt's Renaissance Self-Fashioning, and Roger Chartier's Cultural History.

The most readable history of interdisciplinary initiatives, and the resistances they have encountered, in the formation of American literary study is Gerald Graff's Professing Literature. The most accessible summary of the ideology of interdisciplinarity in contemporary literary studies appears in Stanley Fish's "Being Interdisciplinary Is So Very Hard to Do." But the most impressive demonstrations of the efficacy of interdisciplinary inquiry are still to be found in the way it has helped redefine and extend research in every period of literary study, from the Age of Pericles to postmodernism, and in every methodological orientation, from philology to phenomenology and from history to hermeneutics.

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WORKS CITED AND RECOMMENDED


