Introduction

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What does it mean to say that English is a *discipline?* How does the term shift when it is asserted that English has undergone the process of "disciplining"? Who or what has been disciplined? Who or what is the discipline? The answers to these questions will require more elaboration than perhaps seems likely. We members of academic disciplines don't tend to reflect on the fact of our membership very often. When some of us do so, it is often to question our belonging to this or that discipline, or to question whether the entity with which we are institutionally identified or bound is in fact a discipline at all. Rarely do we reflect on the historical specificity of disciplinary knowledge production, in part because to make the connection between knowledge and its social construction is at least potentially to delegitimate the knowledge produced.

Since it is our assumption that all disciplinary knowledges are social and historical constructions, the essays in *Disciplining English* shouldn't be taken to delegitimate the knowledges of English on these grounds. The purpose of the volume is to explore the historical construction and current practices of English: to show that the current practices both have a history and are neither natural nor inevitable, and to explore how and why these practices have developed. Thus, the volume should lead us to question whether the particular practices and objects that English entails are justifiable given that there could be other practices and objects. In order to consider the specific history and practices of English, it is necessary to understand the specific social organization of knowledge of which English is an example. Before taking up the contributions of the essays themselves, we will here try to present an overview of that social formation we call the academic discipline.

Discipline and the Disciplines

When practitioners of English wonder whether their field is really a discipline, they are usually not asking whether it in fact is an instance of this particular historically produced form. Rather, the question typically involves the implication that English does not live up to the standards of "real" disciplines, the most real of which being those in the sciences. Used in this way, *discipline* is an honorific, a rating attained only by some academic fields. It is important that the reader of this introduction understand that the term is not used in this way here. For us, disciplines are historically specific forms of knowledge production, having certain organizational characteristics, making use of certain practices, and existing in a particular

institutional environment. When the term is used in this way, any field could potentially be a discipline, even, say, astrology, if it had the requisite professional association, peer-reviewed journals, and institutional recognition.[1] We define English as a discipline because it meets these tests. To call English a discipline is neither to criticize nor to praise it. Moreover, to identify particular practices within English as more or less "disciplinary," is not to comment upon their validity or value, but to make a judgment about their form and their relative power.

The social form of the academic discipline is dependent on the techniques and strategies of control that Foucault has called "discipline." The convergence of these names may seem like a mere pun, but it is our contention that Foucault's theory of discipline has much to tell us about how academic disciplines work. Chronologically, the two phenomena coincide. Foucault cites the late eighteenth century as the moment of emergence of the disciplinary regime in prisons, factories, and schools. Likewise, knowledge has been produced by academic disciplines only since the late eighteenth century. In the United States, disciplinary knowledge production begins with the emergence of the research university in the late nineteenth century. Of course, divisions of knowledge have been called "disciplines" since Chaucer's era, but they have only much more recently become the sort of enterprises we would recognize today. As David Shumway and Ellen Messer-Davidow have shown, the term was applied to several different conceptions of the division of knowledge. The "disciplines" of seven liberal arts gave way in the late middle ages to "disciplines" dominated by dialectic and philosophy. In both conceptions, knowledge was embodied in lists of books. There was little if any sense that a discipline was an enterprise designed to produce or discover knowledge.

Moreover, these earlier branches of knowledge were little more than a handy taxonomy. They lacked any independent social existence. All educated individuals learned the liberal arts; later they all learned dialectic and philosophy. We honor the lack of specialization that was typical of the learned men of earlier times by our use of the term "renaissance man." The modern disciplines, which are necessarily inhabited by specialists, are social formations, and not merely intellectual categories or bodies of discourse. While they cannot be identified with particular organizations, such as learned societies, disciplines assume the existence of an informal association of practitioners. "A discipline is, above all, a community based on inquiry and centered on competent investigators. It consists of individuals who associated in order to facilitate intercommunication and to establish some degree of authority over the standards of that inquiry" (Geiger 29). In practice, a learned society typically represents this larger ideal community. Such professional associations—the Modern Language Association, the American Economic Association, etc.—make communication possible and serve as arenas where inter-institutional leadership can emerge. The journals they sponsor furnish the means by which scholars' work is evaluated relative to the discipline, and even the fact of publication in these journals indicates a positive evaluation. This apparatus provides the

mechanism of evaluation by which disciplines exercise authority over their own ranks.

The apparatus of publication makes possible the anonymous surveillance and judgment of practitioners, since the discipline, rather than individuals, is perceived to be the source of such judgments. These judgments do not rest on the authority of individuals, but on authority vested in an anonymous system of methods, of propositions considered to be true, of rules, definitions, techniques, and tools that may in principle be taken over by anyone who has been trained in them. On the basis of such anonymous systems, academic disciplines are able to create formal restrictions on the discourse produced in their name and on who has the right to speak it. A discipline establishes its own standard form of training which becomes a prerequisite for admission into the discipline, and it determines what forms of examination are to be administered to demonstrate the trainees' competence.

Organized in this way, the academic discipline may be the perfect instance of modern power. Disciplines lack a sovereign or a center. Power is not exercised by an individual or even a legislature. Though sometimes mistakenly perceived to have such power by neophytes or outsiders, organizations such as the MLA cannot normally exercise it directly. Rather, power is exercised through numerous micro-judgments and is enforced through equally numerous micro-rewards and micro-penalties. For example, the decision to publish or not to publish a particular article will not only reward or punish an individual practitioner, but it will also endorse or fail to endorse his or her work as a contribution and a model. Such rewards or the lack of them are ultimately judged by individual departments acting in the name of the discipline in the examinations known as promotion and tenure reviews. Disciplinary power's greatest strength, however, lies in its usually not having to be enforced from the outside at all. The training of graduate students and the mentoring of young professionals disciplines them. That is, they come to internalize the values, norms, and standards that the discipline upholds. Since academics spend perhaps the longest "apprenticeship" of any modern professionals, they may be the most disciplined occupational group—a condition that belies the perception that academics are typically rebels or outsiders.

The primary responsibility for such training, credentialling, and judging academic professionals is carried out by departments. These entities came into existence only with the advent of the research university and the rise of modern disciplines. As with professional organizations, a department cannot be equated with a discipline. For example, departments may contain what are in practice several disciplines, as is rather obviously the case at some smaller institutions where there are departments such as "English and Philosophy." More common combinations, such as French and Italian, are less clear examples since it might be argued that the studies of the two languages are subdisciplines of the same field. Physicists often wonder whether their discipline is physics or the particular specialty they practice.

It may be the heterogeneity of departments that led Jencks and Reisman to argue in *Academic Revolutions* that disciplines are mere administrative conveniences. Departments *are* administrative conveniences to some extent, but they owe their existence to the disciplinary organization of knowledge production.

The nineteenth-century college lacked departments entirely. In these colleges, all students took more or less the same course of study, a model that reflected the presumed unity of knowledge. The advent of the elective curriculum corresponds to the rise of the modern disciplines that divided knowledge into distinct specialties. The departmental organization of the university follows from both of these changes, and it in turn changed the way institutions were administered. The old college had been run autocratically by its president, who could and did hire and fire faculty at will. As Veysey shows, the assumption was that the entire institution would share common beliefs. Departmental organization is a recognition not only of specialization, but also of the heterogeneity of knowledges and of the authority of disciplines as inter-institutional bodies.

Academic folklore has failed to recognize how radical a break the emergence of the research university represents. Just as institutions such as Harvard existed before and after the break, so most people assume that the knowledge taught at such institutions must also have been continuous. This is all the more true because common sense identifies the term *discipline* with the content of an academic enterprise. That content is often understood in terms of subject matters defined by Platonic essences rather than historical or cultural contingency. Many academics assume that there is some kind of unbroken continuity of particular disciplines from, say, Aristotle or Copernicus to the present, and they will cite the concept of a research *tradition* to illustrate the assumption.[2] But even those subjects such as classical languages, which dominated the curriculum of the old college, were very different from contemporary disciplines with similar names. Greek and Latin were taught in the college to inculcate mental discipline in students. The modern discipline of classics produces knowledge about ancient languages and the cultures they represent.

The view that disciplines are traditions devoted to timeless essences makes the social form of the discipline irrelevant to the knowledge produced. It misleads us into thinking that, while the quantity and accuracy of knowledge has changed, knowledge itself has not. The lesson of the last great transition in American higher education, however, is that knowledge itself can change almost overnight. The nineteenth-century college treated knowledge as something that needed to be preserved and inculcated. The assumption was that the most significant knowledge was already available, having been recorded in "literature," understood not as belles lettres but as learning. The classical curriculum was in part intended to give students access to this learning by teaching them the languages in which much of it was written. The emphasis on rhetoric was intended to enable students to communicate such wisdom effectively. Nothing that happened in the college was de-

signed to discover or produce knowledge. The college treated knowledge as if it were limited to what was contained in a relatively small body of texts, and the knowledge required to produce more texts of a similar (if not equal) kind. The research university, on the contrary, was founded on the assumption that knowledge needed to be actively sought via the scientific method. The university assumed that the scope of possible knowledge was infinite but that the knowledge humans actually possessed was tiny. Under such circumstances, the quest for knowledge came to replace the inculcation of knowledge as the chief goal of higher education.

The modern disciplines take research—the discovery and production of knowledge—as their goal. They are neither bodies of lore, as a religious discipline might be, nor ancient crafts or skills, such as, say, the discipline of the violinist or the potter. In addition to being social formations, academic disciplines are ensembles of practices. In the natural sciences, these practices typically include the elaborate manipulation of tools and materials. In the social sciences, they may involve the manipulation of human subjects. In the humanities, however, disciplinary practice is most strongly identified with the production of particular kinds of texts, academic books and articles. All disciplines produce such texts, but the perception is that, while the sciences do so only after experiments have been performed, the humanities produce only writing. At most, humanists seem merely to gather information before they write. Because of this perception and others—for example, the "two cultures" opposition—the humanities are sometimes not reckoned to produce knowledge. But the humanities disciplines came into existence as sciences, enterprises that claimed to produce knowledge of the same truth-value as any other discipline in the university. And, while the practices of many of the humanities have undergone considerable change, they continue to be knowledge-producing practices.

As social and practical entities, disciplines cannot be equated with the knowledge—the discourse, the statements, the facts—they produce, or with the domain that they study. They are, however, strongly identified with both of these, which could not exist without the discipline. All academic disciplines constitute their own domains or objects of investigation. The object that disciplinary inquiry addresses is not available independently of disciplinary language and practice. At one level, this means that physical things—rocks or muscle fibers or literary texts—are understood differently by practitioners in different disciplines. In a larger sense, each discipline constitutes an idealized object that is the domain of its investigation. A discipline's object has only the properties and attributes that fit the discipline's assumptions. The object of history, for example, has traditionally included war and politics, but excluded much of the rest of what happened in the past. So while historians work most often with texts as their source of evidence, the texts themselves are not the object of the discipline of history. The assumptions of the discipline of history render the text a mere medium for facts or information. If interpretations of historical documents became the preoccupation of historians, in-

terpretations of historical events might well be permanently deferred. In this sense, the object constituted by the discipline *embodies* the assumptions of the discipline, without those assumptions being made available for reflection. The disciplinary object appears to members of a discipline engaged in their normal practice as entirely natural and independent.

And yet, this account of disciplinary knowledge is misleading because it suggests much greater agreement than disciplines typically exhibit. A discipline's object is the starting point for research, not its end. Moreover, there may in practice be conflicting versions of the object. While disciplinary practitioners typically share a set of assumptions, methods, and practices, the knowledge they produce tends toward dispersion rather than unity. Disciplines are not organized in order to solve real world problems or to achieve consensus, but rather to produce more knowledge about their objects. In spite of its exclusions, disciplinarity did not have the effect of reducing the overall quantity of learned discourse. On the contrary, while the demand for evaluation encouraged the repetition of previously successful work, it also required the continual production of such work. Thus, disciplinarity requires the production of increasing amounts of similar work, and disciplines can be conceived as machines for the production of statements. "For a discipline to exist, there must be the possibility of formulating—and of doing so ad infinitum—fresh propositions" (Foucault, "Discourse" 223). Thus, disciplines are structured by problems or questions that are in some way self-reproducing. Since new statements must differ appropriately from previous ones, disciplines tend to produce an increasing quantity of narrowly diverging statements.

For Foucault, disciplines are not unified bodies of knowledge, but dispersed ones. This vision conflicts radically with our expectations, and it should lead us to wonder where the criterion of unity comes from and why it should be applied. The criterion of unity functions socially much more than intellectually. The claim of disciplinary unity naturalizes the discipline's boundaries and legitimizes its right to exclude other disciplines from its territory. A discipline is a professional form, claiming control of a certain kind of work based on the cognitive exclusiveness of its knowledge (Abbott, Larson). In the interest of maintaining such control, disciplines regularly engage, as Thomas Gieryn has argued, in "boundary-work," the production of arguments and strategies to justify, maintain, and construct the divisions of knowledge. Boundary-work serves the interests of the individuals who practice it and their colleagues whom it represents by asserting their authority over a domain of knowledge, and, therefore, over the right to perform certain kinds of work. For purely academic disciplines, this work is typically the production of knowledge itself, but it also includes the teaching of information, skills, and ideas related to that knowledge. Thus, the discipline of mathematics controls the teaching of elementary mathematics to college students, and, at a distance, the teaching of arithmetic and mathematics to lower level pupils. As Abbott has shown, the academic knowledge produced by a professional group serves to shore up public

confidence in that group's ability to perform the services it controls, and such knowledge production is only indirectly related to the performance of the service. Most academic disciplines reflect this disjunction in the separation of teaching and research. Undergraduates are typically not producing knowledge. At the most, they are learning to do so; at the least, they are learning useful skills or information that are tangential to the discipline's research but for the teaching of which society is willing to pay.

To understand disciplines as professions is to recognize that they exist in the real world and not in the proverbial ivory tower. That means that disciplines are subject to the demands of the larger culture and society just as other social formations are. The research university emerged at the same time as the corporate or monopoly stage of capitalism. It would be a mistake to understand this institution as a mere creature of the economic developments of the late nineteenth century, but it would be a mistake of at least equal proportions to discount the connection. The new economic order, much more dependent on professionals and managers, on the mass media and advertising, and on product innovation and production efficiency, needed a corps of workers trained in ways that the classical curriculum did not seem suited to enable. Disciplines did not in the main train students directly for such corporate tasks, but disciplinary study did teach problem solving rather than mere memorization. We may be on the verge of a new shift in higher education, one that will make disciplines as obsolete as the old classical curriculum. If the university continues to perform direct corporate service, such as product design or testing, rather than disciplinary research, then disciplines will be replaced by other forms of knowledge production.[3]

English as a Discipline

Just as people often assume that there have been disciplines ever since Aristotle, they also seem to think that there has been a discipline of English at least since the Beowulf poet was composing his epic. But since there were no disciplines until the late nineteenth century, English could not have been one until then. In fact, the name *English* doesn't begin to appear in connection with higher education until precisely this moment. In Jack London's *Martin Eden* (1912), the eponymous hero is mystified when his bourgeois girl friend tells him that she has been taking courses in English at the university. Patricia Harkin in this volume refers to a historical event that is often taken to mark the emergence of English, Boylston Professor of Rhetoric Francis James Child's becoming the first professor of English at Harvard. It is important to insist that Child's new appointment reflects the emergence of a new discipline, and not the change of an old one. As professor of rhetoric, Child didn't practice a discipline in the modern sense. Grammar and rhetoric, which were taught in the old college, were not English. Thus, *Disciplining English* is not

about how a preexisting object or field, English, became disciplined, but rather about the way the new discipline constructed its object, defended its boundaries, and trained and examined its practitioners. The essays presented here are concerned both with, on the one hand, what these practices have prohibited, excluded, and limited, and, on the other, what they have encouraged, included, and produced.

We have already argued that disciplines are typically not the unified bodies of knowledge they sometimes represent themselves as being. But even if the divided character of most disciplines is recognized, English may still seem unusually fragmented. Looking only at the dominant practice within English, the study of literature, one sees a field more fraught by differences of theory and method than most others. The history of English studies is often told in narratives that recount the struggles over how literature should be taught and studied (Graff; Ohmann; Shumway, *Creating*). Indeed, until recently, the history of English was often treated as identical to the history of criticism, which was mainly told as a history of ideas. Battles among warring camps of critics have been portrayed as having winners and losers, but unlike the stories of other disciplinary histories, it seems that in the case of English literature the losers never quite disappear. The new "paradigms" continue to be contested by the old, even as yet newer conceptions of literary study emerge and challenge the dominant. And though proponents of each new approach triumphantly claim their model represents an advance over the last, it is hard for them to write a convincing narrative of progress in the larger history. The current practice of literary study is far too divided for any one narrative to gain widespread acceptance.

English was not always so divided, however. At the outset, early practitioners of English established disciplinary boundaries and a standard practice within them, naturalizing literature as a seemingly independent object of study from which the discipline derived its identity and its unity. But if literature gave English its identity and became its object of research, English was from the outset as well in control of the teaching of writing. Thus, rhetoric was absorbed and transformed by English into the teaching of composition, a service that literature teachers claimed to be the most fit to provide. There were those within English departments who conceived of the field mainly in terms of teaching, and especially instruction in writing and rhetoric. Similarly, English departments often included literary journalists, critics, and others who conceived of the mission of English as the preservation and transmission of liberal culture. To teach writing or to celebrate culture, however, was not to practice the discipline, as it became increasingly clear. Criticism, rhetoric, and pedagogical matters of all sorts were not disciplinary practice; that was research in philology and literary history. In his contribution to the volume, David Russell describes the exclusion of these other activities as a process of *purification.* The disciplinary object and the practices devoted to it were

narrowly defined, so that much of the labor that was performed under the name English was not disciplinary.

The designation by early English departments of rhetoric and criticism as "extradisciplinary" reveals the arbitrary character of disciplinary boundaries, objects, and practices. The existence of these disparate activities within the same faculties has historically been a cause of dissension. While these conflicts go back to the beginning of the discipline, they have become intensified in recent years as practices other than literary studies have developed according to different narratives into either subdisciplines or distinct but captive disciplines. In the 1930s and 1940s, criticism began to rival literary history as the dominant research practice. This in itself intensified conflict within literary studies. More important for purposes of this volume, however, are conflicts among contingents devoted to literature, composition and rhetoric, and creative writing. The 1930s and 1940s are also the watershed years for these developments. In 1936, the New Humanist critic and American literature scholar Norman Foerster founded the Writer's Workshop at the University of Iowa. In 1949, the Council on College Composition and Communication had its first meeting. Since then we have seen the proliferation of M.F.A. programs that train and credential creative writing teachers, and the steady growth of creative writing courses for undergraduates. Similarly, there has been a proliferation of rhetoric and composition tracks within English Ph.D. programs—along with a few Rhetoric Ph.D. programs—and a burgeoning set of research practices ranging from quantitative social science on the one hand, to rhetorical theory on the other. As a result of these changes, English departments now consist not only of people with conflicting literary theories, but also of people who have no affiliation with literary study whatever. Moreover, these more recently disciplined practices, especially composition and rhetoric, are themselves riven by theoretical and methodological divisions.

The essays in *Disciplining English* reflect the vast and unruly dispersion of knowledges that is English. Such dispersion has produced the paradox that within the field of English heterogeneity and hegemony exist simultaneously. The disunity of English does not mean that anything goes; rather, there exists a constant struggle among different groups distinguished by conflicting boundaries, practices, objects, and assumptions, but such conflicts always take place within a structure of dominance. The most entrenched hegemony is not that of a particular theory, but of mundane assumptions and routine practices that are seldom noticed let alone questioned. It is only by stepping back from such normal practice that we can begin to become aware of what the discipline takes for granted. *Disciplining English* is an exercise in this reflection. Its contributors share neither a particular theoretical perspective nor a single disciplinary practice. (Indeed, they may well disagree with many points we argue in this introduction.) What the essays do share, however, is a common attitude toward their material. They all recognize the histori-

cally contingent character of the current arrangement of English. *Disciplining English* is genealogical in that it questions the idea of "disciplines as seamless, progressive, or naturally 'about' certain topics." Each of the essays begins with the premise that English is a "historically contingent and adventitious" assembly of "various ideas and practices" (Messer-Davidow, Shumway, and Sylvan 4). The contributions help us understand the historical changes that have produced the current discipline, and the contemporary conditions that are themselves in flux. The volume seeks to make visible the background conditions of English under the assumption that understanding this usually unexamined background can help promote desirable changes, rather than mere change, which is inevitable in any case.

Some of the essays in this book are concerned mainly with the ways in which the discipline of English has differentiated and bounded itself. How, for example, did it incorporate certain types of knowledge and exclude others? How, as a new discipline, was it assembled from bits and pieces of other practices? How was expertise attributed to individuals pursuing certain kinds of work, while those pursuing other kinds were stigmatized as unscientific or unscholarly? Other contributions seek to reveal the connections between the discipline and larger social forces and conditions. What ideologies are embodied in the objects English has constituted, or in its research and teaching practices? How has the discipline fit into the social and economic order that has nurtured it? How are the discipline's own oppressive conditions reflective of more general social inequities?

Part I: Episodes in the History of English

The essays in the first part of the book, "Episodes in the History of English," focus on the internal and external forces that enabled the discipline of English to constitute its own idealized object as a domain of investigation. They examine the historical development of the discipline's boundaries and of the practices and features that they contain: the distinction between "composition" and "literature"; important historical personages and key intellectuals that embodied for their time new disciplinary standards; the constitution of specialties and subdisciplines, such as the Renaissance, American Literature, and theory. Hence, many of these essays are engaged in recovering and reframing the textual remains of these frequently forgotten histories, revealing in often startling images the arbitrary and constructed boundaries that constitute the field we take for granted today.

The history behind how the discipline of English came to credit some forms of labor over others is a complex one, and it is more often than not a story that centers on key individuals from our past who come to stand for and embody the important objectives that were eventually deemed necessary for the advancement of the profession. According to Patricia Harkin, one figure, Francis James Child who in 1876 became the first professor of English at Harvard, has been invoked

time and again to mark the emergence of English. In her "Child's Ballads," Harkin analyzes narratives that represent Child from different perspectives within the discipline, and she shows how Child's story is used to support a variety of different interpretations of the history of the discipline. Thus, Child has been seen both as the exemplum of professional objectivity and productivity, setting a perfect standard of scholarship, and as a professor whose intellectual acumen precluded his investment in teaching oratorical and writing skills. "All of the narratives," in Harkin's reading of them, are "about labor—about how academic work has been described, analyzed (into binary oppositions), evaluated and made exemplary." Child reflects a shift in how the role of the professor is constituted. In the nineteenth-century college, it was a vocation or calling; in the research university, it is professionalized and becomes a career. Moreover, Child's preference for pursuing literary research over the teaching of rhetoric is emblematic of the discipline's values. But most importantly, Child "changed the conditions of academic labor."

Harkin's essay observes the birth of long-standing but arbitrary hierarchies that privilege literature over rhetoric and research over teaching. David Russell's essay, "Institutionalizing English: Rhetoric on the Boundaries," also examines the establishment of literature as the disciplinary object of English and the resulting boundary that deemed rhetoric and composition outside of the discipline. Russell shows that, as a disciplinary formation, English needed to "purify" itself of any activities extraneous to the object of its research. Professors of rhetoric had taught in institutions that had privileged oral communication. In the new research university and in the emerging disciplines, writing displaced oratory and "rhetoric was discredited." Rhetoricians thus had to either disavow their former field or try to find a new role for it. What came to be known as composition resulted from both of these strategies, its lowly status resulting from its association with sophistic knowledge in a university that privileged abstract knowledge over skills, truth over rhetorical ability. Yet, English needed composition as what Russell calls a "mediating" function, one that could be used to defend the importance of the discipline as a useful field of study. The discipline was able to capitalize on the "social credit" this position earned for itself in the eyes of the university, and to spend this credit by freeing itself to found literature as a bona fide research-driven discipline.

If both Harkin and Russell are concerned mainly with the demarcation of English from older practices and the establishment of internal boundaries, Elizabeth Wilson describes struggles over an external one, the boundary between English and the social sciences. In "A Short History of a Border War," she shows how the pragmatic pedagogical concerns of the social sciences in the new university shaped the context for the ensuing debate between literary historians and critics in English literature. Wilson's essay points to the broader cultural context that shaped the political content of pedagogy in the university of the 1920s through the 1940s. By focusing on Dewey's definition of progressive education—where "a student might focus on a specific project—building a boat or running a mock farm"—

Wilson is able to uncover the political antagonisms that surfaced when the profession adapted residual Arnoldian conceptions of culture to counter the pragmatic emphasis on education. Wilson's narrative helps us recover the progressive ideology that once defined the contours of these *social* sciences in the new university, where the study of classical literature was seen as an aristocratic privilege.

While the first three essays deal with disciplinary boundaries, the next three are focused on the construction of the object of English, including the tools and practices that helped to produce and maintain it. That object was, of course, literature, but it was "literature" as the discipline conceived it. In "Period-Making and the Discipline: A Genealogy of the Idea of the Renaissance in *ELH,*" Craig Dionne examines the idealized vision of the period that that journal helped to promote. *ELH* began as an organ of Johns Hopkins' prestigious Tudor and Stuart Literary Club, which was founded to both to encourage the study of English literature of the period and to promote "fellowship and the love of literature." But the academic journal emerges as a necessary feature of a larger disciplinary program intended, in the words of Ira Remsen, president of Johns Hopkins in 1903, "to keep the body of workers in line." Dionne reads *ELH*'s idealized view of the early modern period in the context of the newly forming research model at Hopkins, which was among the first to employ intensified, programmatic standards to its graduate degree to ensure the "progress" of its students. Growing out of this immediate setting, the journal's view of the "Renaissance" is a reified image of a world free from what one president of the Tudor and Stuart Literary Club described as "the modern vices" of "today's factory, polling booth, and laboratory." For Dionne, the literary historian's fetish for the past is constructed out of the modern "master narrative of 'Renaissance order-Modern disorder,'" a narrative that asks the contemporary humanist to "celebrate and retrieve what it is we lost from the distantly abstract and spiritual life" of the Renaissance "and set it into play."

In "Emerson and the Shape of American Literature," David Shumway examines the invention of an American tradition. Where previously American writing had been represented as a shapeless chronology, the new subdiscipline of American literature constituted a new object with Emerson at its center. This "tradition" was built by a new kind of arbiter of cultural taste, the academic, who saw his mission not as political or social criticism, as had his predecessor, the literary intellectual, but as the maintenance of an ideal order of aesthetic quality. The academic turned to Emerson and represented him as the "father of our culture" to ensure what Shumway calls the "discursive regularity" of an idealized American tradition. Shumway is not addressing the usual canon debates over exclusion and inclusion, but rather seeks to explain the positive function of a literary tradition in maintenance of cultural hegemony. Thus, he examines how Norman Foerster and other founders of subdiscipline harnessed Emerson's idealism to affirm humanist "truths" and invented his "centrality" to fill "a need for a native, cultural elite...which presented itself in the rhetoric of radical individualism and democ-

racy." Shumway's argument demonstrates the arbitrariness of this shape that Americanists gave to their object. Only by conceiving American literature "as a field traversed by many different figures and groups, some of which converge and many of which conflict," Shumway argues, can we move away from a monolithic view of culture that continues to shape the critical debates for and against the canon of American literature today.

In the beginning, the dominant practice of English was philology and literary history. By 1950, it had shifted to become criticism, marking a change in the way the discipline typically understood its object. In the 1970s and 1980s, a new practice, termed "theory," came to rival criticism for dominance within the discipline, and it too has produced a reconstruction of the disciplinary object. The final essay in this section, Jeffrey Williams's "The Posttheory Generation," looks at the intellectual situation of scholars who entered the profession after theory. Thus, it presents a history of the very recent past, tracing the "dispersion or breakdown of the paradigm of theory." It relates this shift in the disciplinary object to "a drastically reconfigured job market, pinched in the vise of a restructured and downsizing university," connecting intellectual changes in English to its current social and economic conditions, which will be addressed again by Cary Nelson in the next section.

Part II: The Current Arrangements

The second part of the book focuses on ideologies, conditions, and practices current in English at the start of the new millennium. These essays remind us that, in spite of poststructuralism, literary theory has failed to deliver us from the intellectual baggage of earlier practices, and that, in spite of the rise of creative writing and rhetoric to disciplinary status, English remains dominated by literary studies. Moreover, neither new theories nor new practices have fundamentally altered the role of English in American society. "The school functions," John Guillory reminds us in his *Cultural Capital,* "as a system of credentialization by which it produces a specific *relation* to culture . . . it reproduces social relations" (56). The more specific training of candidates for corporate management that Evan Watkins and Richard Ohmann have shown is part of the history of English is still a part of its mission. These facts exist in contradiction with more recent attempts to teach oppositional or resistant modes of rationality with names such as "critical thinking," "strong reading," and "resistant reading." This contradiction inhabits the most mundane routines of professional life: not just teaching "style" in our writing class or ascribing authority to a critic whose work we admire, but also the simple act of assigning grades. Whatever the discipline's claims, it reproduces the conditions of a class-structured society at nearly every level: in graduate training, in the job "market," in promotion and tenure practices, in publishing and funding.

Some of the essays in the last half of *Disciplining English* examine how largely

unspoken ideas of universal experience and romantic conceptions of authorship get codified in important institutional "sites" where dominant cultural perspectives are explicitly and tacitly transmitted: different types of classroom settings, in textbooks, through one's "voice" in one's research writing, and in the self-fashioning of academic careers. These essays examine what Louis Althusser identified as the central project of the ideological apparatus, the production of systems of representation that naturalize the subject's place in the social hierarchy. In this case, the "subject" is the working academician—the teacher of a composition class, the celebrity critic, the creative writing professor, the beginning English major, the bibliographic specialist—whose professional identity is the product of an elaborate set of teaching strategies, and institutional technologies, from research manuals to handbooks. The production of intellectual power, in the form of credibility, authority, and authenticity, is inscribed in professional practices that help naturalize the very practice of "English" not only by legitimizing traditional canonical formations but by empowering an institutionally inscribed subject, "the specialist," "the teacher," or "the critic," to speak with social and political authority and wield cultural capital.

Other essays deal with the actual social relations of the discipline. It is not enough to examine how strategies of the institutional apparatus produce a subject who works within dominant social relations. "No institution is . . . reducible to its social function," Guillory adds. "Institutions of reproduction succeed by taking as their first object not the reproduction of social relations but the reproduction of the institution itself" (57). Such social positions as "critic," "teacher," and "specialist" are spaces where professional identities are formed to reproduce the semi-autonomy of the discipline. These distinctions are based on residual notions of authority that date back to earlier historically specific social formations, such as those of the master-apprentice relations within guilds, military distinctions of rank, and outmoded romantic conceptions of a radical individualism necessary for frontier expansion—all of which have a rather unstable relation to the dominant forms of social production today. The essays in the second half of the book examine how the internal, semi-autonomous forms of labor within the discipline of English ultimately maintain an ambivalent and contradictory position in relation to larger social and political interests.

Members of the discipline of English gain entry by taking graduate courses. While such courses obviously teach the content of the discipline, they also expose students to the conventions of disciplinary practice. In his "Composing Literary Studies in Graduate Courses," John Schilb examines the important but usually unmentioned activity of teaching writing to graduate students. The lack of discussion of this issue is perhaps not surprising given the fact that the professoriate still tends to believe that college students should have learned to write before they enrolled in college. Beginning with David Bartholomae's influential notion that novice students of writing need to learn to "invent the university" by assimilating the conventions that constitute knowledge, Schilb argues persuasively that graduate education must be seen as a continuation of this process. Writing is the task that will

be most decisive for the careers of graduate students in English, but, much like another important task, teaching, writing is almost never directly taught. Schilb proposes that graduate students should be asked to focus on their own writing and that the conventions of writing in the discipline should be made explicit. Thus, Schilb suggests that teachers of graduate students need to help them read the discipline's research in terms of its rhetorical strategies and understand the issues that the discipline currently regards as significant. Yet Schilb also recognizes the potentially conservative character of these proposals, so he also calls for a recognition of conflicts within the discipline and between the discipline and the larger society.

Teachers in traditionally defined English courses face an even more daunting task of challenging discursive boundaries in ways that patently contradict the very professional knowledge it is their job to impart. Molly Hite's "Inventing Gender: Creative Writing and Critical Agency," is a critique of the ideology inherent in the dominant form of the creative writing workshop. This bourgeois-humanist ideology was once dominant in the discipline as a whole, and it continues to exert influence in both academic and nonacademic literary criticism. As Hite observes, what differentiates creative writing is that the theories which made ideology a central question for criticism were largely ignored. Thus, the creative writing workshop has an ideology that "denies it is one." This makes it hard for ideological issues to surface in workshops, and it legitimates an unacknowledged bias against politically committed writing. Hite offers an alternative conception of the workshop that takes contemporary theory into account in the teaching of fiction writing. It asks students not to represent gender as natural, but to "invent gender": to participate discursively in remaking sexual difference.

On the surface, research appears to be that form of intellectual labor that is most free from the institutional restraints that determine the type of work one does in the classroom; common sense provides an illusory vision of research as the place where critics are afforded a limited form of freedom to challenge the discursive perimeters that constitute intellectual labor. However, it is in research where we are asked to model the tacit standards of professional aptitude and zeal. As Laurie Finke and Marty Shichtman point out in "Profiting Pedants: Symbolic Capital, Text Editing, and Cultural Reproduction," when old literary history was dominant, textual editing was among the most visible and prestigious activities within English. Their essay traces the decline and possible resurrection of the disciplinary value of this practice by focusing on medievalism as a subdiscipline. Finke and Shichtman examine the institutional mechanisms that confer prestige to textual editing as a disciplinary practice. Before World War II, editing was a certain route to tenure and a valid mode of acquiring professional status. But the disciplinary contexts of research in English changed dramatically, and "symbolic capital ceased to accrue to the editors of texts." Finke and Shichtman focus on the interplay of forces that legitimate some modes of research over others, explaining why in the next decade "digital reproduction and transmission will once again recenter the academic enterprise making text editing a profitable means of career advancement."

These technical innovations are not the only changes effecting the discipline of English. In "A New Kind of Work: Publishing, Theory, and Cultural Studies," Ronald Schleifer takes up the contemporary practice of theory, its relationship with cultural studies, and the impact of them both upon scholarly publishing. Schleifer observes that theory has called into question assumptions about knowledge that the disciplines and their publishers have taken for granted. Theory and its intellectual offspring, cultural studies, have meant not merely new methods of literary criticism, but a much more fundamental "critique of the concept and phenomenon of knowledge itself and the *cultural conditions* for that knowledge." This critique, however, has put theory and cultural studies at odds with the traditional mission of scholarly books and journals, the preservation of truth. Presses and journals committed to publishing in cultural studies need to reflect conflict rather than agreement, and this has begun to happen in periodicals such as *Genre* and in certain book series that in their very form represent knowledge as essentially incomplete.

If Schleifer is concerned with how intellectual trends effect material practices in the profession, Cary Nelson contextualizes the discipline in the material practices of the contemporary university. "What Hath English Wrought: The Corporate University's Fast Food Discipline" begins with the reality of the job crisis, a reality that the Modern Language Association has only within the past few years deigned to recognize. Nelson sees trends in the hiring policies of English departments that may well forecast where the university as a whole is headed. Noting the rapid increase in the use of part-time teachers by English departments, Nelson suggests that this could well be the model other departments will be forced to follow as corporatization turns the university from a place where knowledge is produced and shared to one where information and students are both turned into commodities. Thus, Nelson sees the corporate university as profoundly anti-intellectual. His essay suggests that, in spite of the very real restrictions of the discipline of the research university, there are worse forms of discipline with which English is already having to cope.

The final section of the volume consists of comments by Richard Ohmann, whose book *English in America* was the first major study of the institution of English in American universities. Following the critical trajectory of Ohmann's earlier work, published in 1976, we hope that this latest contribution continues to invite the critical self-reflection needed to begin to think about change.

Notes

1. That it would be unlikely to receive such recognition is a significant issue. Disciplinary status is partly related to boundaries that define large categories of discourse, for example, science and nonscience, knowledge and superstition.

2. For an example of theory built on such a conception see Toulmin whose use of

the term *genealogy* reinforces the sense of historical continuity implicit in *tradition.* When *genealogy* refers to the lineage of a species or a people, it has historically been essentialist, the current generation being understood as the embodiment of a set of essential characteristics. Moreover, the metaphor suggests that intellectual change occurs gradually in the manner that traditional evolutionary theory asserted of species change. A more useful conception of the genealogy of knowledge comes from Nietzsche via Foucault. Like more recent renderings of Darwin's theory, this genealogy regards the history of knowledge as discontinuous and random. Only by beginning with this assumption can we recognize the radical implications of historical and future changes in the university.

3. For a longer discussion of where the university may be headed, see Shumway, "Disciplinarity, Corporatization, and the Crisis."

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