

**DISCIPLINARITY AT THE
FIN DE SIÈCLE**

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Literary Study and the Modern System of the Disciplines

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THE HISTORY of literary study in the Anglo-American university is marked by a striking discontinuity of which the consequences have been very great, if also poorly understood. When departments of English and modern foreign languages were created in the 1870s, the primary subject of study within these departments (as their names indicated) was not literature but *language*. By the 1940s, however, literature and its correlative discourse of "literary criticism" had thoroughly displaced language from its former position of disciplinary preeminence. It will not be my concern to chronicle that displacement, a story that has been ably recounted by Gerald Graff and others.¹ In this chapter, I look closely at two antecedent forms in which literature and language were studied in the late-nineteenth-century university: belles lettres and philology. I argue that the supersession of these earlier disciplinary forms was never complete; and I suggest at the close of this chapter that the residual effects of this failed transition trouble all subsequent versions of literary study.

BELLES LETTRES

Before examining the disciplinary forms of belles lettres and philology, it will be necessary to grasp synoptically the system of the disciplines in the centuries preceding the familiar modern trioka of natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities. The early modern disciplinary system was dominated by the study of the classical languages and theology. This curriculum was very entrenched, and universities long resisted the introduction of more modern discourses of knowledge. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, new discourses of knowledge were developed for the most part outside the university under the names of "moral philosophy" and "natural philosophy." With the exception of medicine, natural philosophy was pursued well into the nineteenth century outside the university, as the avocation of gentlemen who possessed private means for research, such as Robert

Boyle, or in the context of state-sponsored associations, such as the Royal Society. Moral philosophy was also often an amateur enterprise; but unlike natural philosophy, it found a niche in the eighteenth-century university system, where it branched into a number of discourses on ethics and society while maintaining a discreet distance from dogmatic theology. It was linked rather to the higher faculty of law or "jurisprudence," for which it provided a kind of propaedeutic, or theoretical foundation. Moral philosophy was a decidedly modern discourse in that its arguments were based, like those of the new science, on "experience." The problematization of this empirical foundation later specified the domain of philosophy in its later sense, as a discourse that reflects upon knowledge but is not necessarily scientific. As we shall see, the break-up of philosophy in the older sense enabled the modern humanities to emerge as nonempirical disciplines.

However modern in outlook, moral philosophy continued to be influenced by Greek and Latin texts on political and moral subjects. Yet the importation of classical thought into moral philosophy had little effect on the actual teaching of Greek and Latin texts in the university. Moral philosophy, as exemplified by the work of Locke or Shaftesbury, circulated in the print media of the eighteenth-century public sphere rather than in the university lecture halls. It was not until several decades into the eighteenth century that moral philosophy was assimilated into the university in lecture courses by new "professors of moral philosophy" such as Adam Smith. Still later, moral philosophy was institutionalized in American university curricula as a senior-level culminative course often taught by the university president (though the content of this course was usually a varied and quite indeterminate mix of modern subjects).² By contrast, study of the classics at the lower levels remained very conservative, rehearsing the rhetorical *paideia* of the ancients in an increasingly rigid fashion. The disconnection between moral philosophy and the classical curriculum explains why the first disciplinary form of vernacular literary study in the university emerged from moral philosophy and not from the classics. In fact, this disciplinary form—belles lettres—was proposed by its advocates as a supplement, and even eventually as an alternative, to the curriculum of classical languages and rhetoric. Belles lettres introduced vernacular literature into the university for the first time, as a distinctly modern subject.

In England, a decisive moment of innovation in the university curriculum might be located in 1748 with Adam Smith's course of public lectures on rhetoric at the University of Edinburgh, given at the instigation of Lord Kames. These lectures, followed in subsequent years by private seminars at Glasgow, were enormously influential, even though they remained unpublished until the present century. The substance of their argument was appropriated by Hugh Blair in his extremely popular *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* published in 1783, and running to dozens of editions over

many decades. Blair was the first professor of "Belles Lettres," a name he appended to his official title as "Professor of Rhetoric" because it sounded more modern.³ Smith and Blair may be said to have institutionalized belles lettres as a protodisciplinary form in the university; they have also been credited with the invention of "College English."⁴ Today, belletrism signifies an egregiously "pretheoretical" discourse, devoted to mere effusions of appreciation and to groundless declarations of taste or judgment. Yet belles lettres emerged out of the discourse of moral philosophy, and it possessed all the theoretical sophistication of that discourse, by virtue of its very modern orientation to an empiricist epistemology.

Let us examine, then, the program of belles lettres as a candidate for disciplinary status. It consisted of two agendas. It was first of all a discourse of judgment or taste, designed to cultivate a faculty of discrimination, the ability to distinguish good writing ("fine letters") from bad. It thus held up examples of writing for inspection, pointing out "beauties" and "faults." In this respect, it was very close to a discourse that was already circulating in the sphere of periodical journalism, and which was called "criticism." The latter discourse was itself little more than a century old, but the important point to recognize here is that criticism was a discourse primarily of the new print media. Its practitioners were not usually associated with the universities. Criticism was addressed not to Greek and Latin works but rather to new works of vernacular literature, although the standards of judgment applied to these new works were supposed to be derived from the model of the ancients.

Throughout the eighteenth century, a close relation obtained between the practice of criticism and moral philosophy. Criticism provided moral philosophy with observations and examples drawn from literature that were useful for discoursing upon social life generally; hence it was possible for Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, Hume, Smith, and others to initiate philosophical reflection on the basis of problems in criticism, and even to elaborate ideas about the beautiful into philosophical systems that comprehended nothing less than "human understanding" or "human nature." These systemic theories, grounded in concepts such as Smith's "sympathy," and elaborated later in the century into philosophical notions of the "aesthetic," provided criticism in turn with sophisticated new terms for describing the process of judgment. This two-way exchange was enabled by the fact that both criticism and moral philosophy were dedicated to the end of refining conduct or of disseminating "polite" manners.⁵

Belles lettres, then, was first of all a translation of criticism into pedagogic form; it was an attempt to return criticism to the very "philosophy" that Joseph Addison's criticism famously brought "out of the schools." But as with any process of translation, criticism was also changed by its assimilation to the school. If criticism circulated mainly in the form of the periodical

essay, belles lettres necessarily took the form in the university of a course of lectures. Such a course usually had no regular standing in the curriculum, but was rather grafted onto the existing discipline of rhetoric. Yet the introduction of a composite course known as "rhetoric and belles lettres" was more than simply a strategy for introducing the practice of criticism into the university; belles lettres was, in fact, made to function as a new *kind* of rhetoric. This was its crucial difference from criticism. Belles lettres was defined by a second agenda, then, of inculcating a practice of *writing*. In order to realize this aim, the critics themselves (chiefly Addison and Swift) were often cited as examples of fine writing or style, as models for rhetorical imitation.

By invoking the critics as model writers, Smith and his successors were able to develop new stylistic norms of clarity or "perspicuity" that were incompatible with the emphasis in the old rhetoric on ornament and "copious" elaboration.⁶ In his authoritative history of eighteenth-century rhetoric, Wilbur Samuel Howell observes that Smith redirected the enterprise of rhetoric away from the traditional goal of persuasion and toward the goal of *communication*.⁷ The purpose of communication was not to compel agreement by means of impassioned or devious language, but to convey ideas or sentiments accurately from one mind to another. Supported by a theory of "moral sentiments" in which calmer and more sociable affects were favored over the "passions" of antiquity, or the enthusiasms of theological debate, Smith's new rhetoric was a thorough displacement of the old.⁸ The reorientation of language arts from persuasion to communication, which Smith did not invent but deliberately advanced, was nothing less than a shift in the ground of language, portending the most far-reaching transformation of Western discourses. If belles lettres was the sign of such an epochal shift, however, it initially occupied a surprisingly modest place in the curriculum. It was by no means the equal of the old rhetoric, or of classical studies, which continued to dominate the curriculum.

The use of vernacular literary models in the new rhetoric or belles lettres instituted at the university level a process of vernacularization already undertaken in many lower schools. Vernacular literacy was the primary means for enlarging the domain of "standard" English, which, in fact, had a very narrow social base before the eighteenth century. The aim of reducing the dialectal diversity of English to a standard was embraced by the schools, the state, literary culture, upwardly mobile class strata, and provincial speakers of English—for different reasons, perhaps, but with similar long-term effects. The goal of establishing a normative English was a powerful force driving the educational system toward the use of the vernacular, and toward the elevation of English literature to "classic" status. But the point we must emphasize here is that in the lower schools, the use of vernacular literature was linked to *grammar* rather than, as with belles lettres, to rhetoric. It is

easy to see why this is so, given the social forces impelling the standardization of English. For the broad new educational constituency of middle- and lower-class students, as well as for colonized populations in the British empire, learning to speak and write English correctly (that is, normatively) was a condition for participation in the political and economic life of the nation. Correct English, as produced by a pedagogy utilizing the anthologies of "elegant extracts" that proliferated during the period, was to have an "improving" effect, mainly by purging one's language of impropriety, low diction, or dialect features. Belles lettres built on this foundation in correct speech by refining taste and manners at a higher level of education, where the practice of grammar could be supplemented by the cultivation of taste in reading and of style in writing.

Nevertheless, one has to acknowledge that there was no sharp break in the continuum of "improvement" from its base in correct language to its summit in the cultivation of "style," and thus no sharp break between the aims of vernacular education at the lower and upper levels. If we return to the university level, we can see that the new rhetoric was much closer to grammar in its aims than it was to the political oratory of the old rhetoric. However sophisticated the psychological notions that supported the stylistic norm of clarity in communication, the new rhetoricians claimed that clarity could be achieved most effectively by adhering to standards of grammar and usage. Hence Blair, and even more George Campbell, whose 1776 *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* was second only to Blair's in influence, devoted considerable discussion to issues of grammatical propriety. In its tendency to emphasize grammar, the new rhetoric pointed the way toward the increasing obsession of nineteenth-century rhetoric with correct usage, a concern that marked the emergence of composition at the end of the century, and has been successfully challenged only in recent decades.

The association of belles lettres with rhetoric thus ultimately failed to strengthen its curricular position. While the old rhetoric was a moribund discipline, without the political significance it had for classical society, or even for the humanists of the previous two centuries, the new rhetoric was increasingly narrow in focus, addressed to questions of correct usage and argumentation. Subordinate to moral philosophy, and only opportunistically related to the old rhetoric, belles lettres was condemned to the status of an underdeveloped discipline, always in danger of sinking to a merely effusive discourse of appreciation. In a similar fashion, the new rhetoric espoused by belles lettres displaced the old rhetoric but never successfully *replaced* it; that is, the new rhetoric never came to occupy the same position of centrality in the educational system as the old. As a consequence, the new rhetoric remained underdeveloped as well, always in danger of being reduced to the policing of usage by means of "composition" exercises, or to a form of "elocution" that was little more than the correction of pronunciation and

grammar. In retrospect, it is not surprising that the aims of rhetoric were folded into the disciplinary form of belles lettres, and that the subdiscipline of composition, when it emerged in the later nineteenth century, drew its teachers from the staff of belles lettres. But we shall return to this important moment later.

As widespread and important as the establishment of linguistic norms and corresponding norms of taste in vernacular literature may have been in the lower schools and in the print domain, its expression as belles lettres remained a relatively minor development in the elite universities. Belles lettres and the new rhetoric, as Thomas Miller reminds us in *The Formation of College English*, originated in the provincial universities rather than at the center of the system, in Oxford or Cambridge. In the latter, where professors still lectured in Latin, vernacular education in any form continued to be resisted. Even in the universities of its origin, however, belles lettres was a marginal disciplinary formation. This point is of very great importance, because it suggests that there were compelling institutional constraints at the university level militating against the development of belles lettres as a discipline. Despite the growing success of its cognate pedagogies in the lower schools (but these were likewise, one must point out, not the elite "public" schools), belles lettres remained in some respects a marginal discipline throughout its history. In the eighteenth century, it never achieved the status of a regular curriculum; only later, in the nineteenth century, did this occur, and then in the peripheral institutions of higher education, the colleges and adult education schools for workers or women.

The failure of belles lettres to achieve full disciplinary status is all the more striking when it is contrasted with the success of "criticism" in the journalistic sphere. In such venues as the *Edinburgh Review* and the *Quarterly Review*, criticism became a capacious and indefinitely inclusive discourse, taking as its object not only poems or plays, but also social and political policies, and finally, society itself. Criticism in the print media became the venue for the emergence of the Victorian seers, the new critics of industrial civilization. From Carlyle to Arnold and beyond, the culture critics set themselves against modernity itself, and especially against science, the avatar of modernity. In this context, the relative weakness of belles lettres as a disciplinary form comes into focus. When we look at the evolution of the disciplines in the university of the later nineteenth century, we discover that discourses of knowledge were increasingly subject to norms of scientificity. If criticism found a place of great importance in the mass print media, its belletristic analogue in the university failed to maintain a link to the scientificity that alone would have assured its disciplinary status in the new constellation of disciplines. In this failure, belles lettres suffered a fate similar to that of moral philosophy. This point is of such great historical significance for the future of the disciplines as to require brief elaboration.

In the course of its history, moral philosophy generated a number of subdiscourses on various subjects. These discourses were at first underwritten by an empiricist epistemology, from which psychological propositions about "human nature" were deduced. Moral philosophy was at base a science of human nature. While the norm of scientificity, as I shall be able to demonstrate more fully in the next section, dominated all discipline formation in the nineteenth century, this norm did not remain stable. The same empiricist epistemology could no longer support equally the two pillars of natural and moral philosophy. While "natural philosophy" developed into more rigorous forms of "natural science," the fate of moral philosophy was more complex. In the nineteenth century, the normative scientific content of moral philosophy passed into the nascent discourses of "social science," by way of the transitional, protodisciplinary form of "political economy." Moral philosophy increasingly seemed more speculative than empirical. Discourse about the human world was confronted with the choice between adhering to the methodological protocols of natural science, according to the movement that came to be known pejoratively as "positivism," or asserting a fully incommensurable mode of knowledge, for which the establishment of an epistemological foundation then became problematic.

Husserl was later to describe this situation as nothing less than the "crisis of the European sciences," and to offer the phenomenology of the "life-world" as the long sought alternative to scientific empiricism. In Habermas's more recent sociological terms, Husserl's "crisis" represented a further complication in the ongoing differentiation of value-spheres, namely the predominance of the "cognitive-instrumental" over the "moral-pragmatic" and the "aesthetic-expressive" domains. When the burden of legitimating modernity passed over to the cognitive-instrumental domain, and particularly to science, both the moral and the aesthetic domains could be perceived as standing outside the field of rationality altogether, a position that complicated the development of moral and aesthetic discourses within the university.

The constitution of a hierarchy of rationalities—scientific, moral, aesthetic—determined the formation of disciplines in the late nineteenth century, and in particular the modern character of the humanities. The humanistic disciplines were able to maintain their status among the disciplines only to the extent that they continued to make empirical claims. Over the long term, such empirical claims were hard to sustain, and this fact condemned the humanities to their familiar insecurity in the modern constellation of disciplines.⁹

With this problem we are at the point of confronting a puzzling fact about the formation of the modern disciplines: the bipartite distinction of moral and natural philosophy somehow gave rise to the tripartite distinction of the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences; or, to put this more complexly, a bipartite distinction subsisted into its tripartite successor, with the

humanities now defined in opposition to all of the scientific disciplines. Discourse about the human world fell apart into two sets of disciplines, one of which was scientific, and the other humanistic. Hence social science and ethics, which both developed from within the body of moral philosophy, ended up on opposite sides of the distinction between the sciences and the humanities. In the course of this transition, the disciplinary form of belles lettres also lost its connection with the original empiricism of moral philosophy. Belles lettres was concerned with a kind of experience, which philosophy had come to call "aesthetic"; but this experience seemed no longer capable of being studied with sufficient empiricity to constitute science. Belles lettres declined into an intellectually weak discipline, which consisted on the one hand of a nebulous discourse of taste, and on the other of an increasingly arbitrary and rigid set of stylistic norms carried over from the new rhetoric of the eighteenth century. Already by the time of Matthew Arnold it could be held up to scorn, long before twentieth-century critics attempted to dismiss it altogether. However, the aims of belles lettres never disappeared completely from literary study; and it is still the case that literary education is widely identified with the task of imparting an appreciation of great works of literature, and subordinately of upholding English grammar. Belles lettres remains an unsuccessfully repressed antecedent to literary study as we know it.

PHILOLOGY

Another question must be raised at this point about the historical reasons for the failure of belles lettres in the nineteenth-century university. We often hear that the historical mission of the university can be summed up in the concept of "culture." As the belletrists asserted the necessary connection between the refinement of taste and moral improvement, it would seem that belles lettres ought to have taken its proper place as the chief vehicle for the inculcation of culture in the university. The affinity between belles lettres and what Matthew Arnold called "culture" was attested by Arnold's antagonist, Frederic Harrison, who protested that talk of culture was "the silliest cant of the day" and "sits well on a possessor of *belles lettres*."¹⁰ Belles lettres differed from the program of culture, however, in falling short of the socially transformative claims so often made by its German Idealist advocates, of "reconciling" the division of the head from the heart in modern civilization, or of establishing an extra-political basis for social harmony (as Arnold hoped). Nonetheless one would like to understand why the advocates of belles lettres in the nineteenth century failed, even after Arnold's push in this direction, to appropriate the concept of culture into the developing form of their discipline.

The answer to this question requires that we acknowledge a large divergence in the developmental trajectories of the German and Anglo-American universities. For figures such as Humboldt, Schiller, Schleiermacher, and Fichte, culture (the program of *Bildung*) was to be concretely realized in a new kind of university. The German Idealists had the authorization of the state to reconceive the university, for which Wilhelm von Humboldt provided a blueprint in his famous plan for the University of Berlin. As there was no analogous institutional project in England, Arnold transplanted culture, as it were, into the air. In fact, the Anglo-American university of the nineteenth century never adopted the rationale of culture or translated its program into curricular form.¹¹ Even in the German university, however, the idea of culture far exceeded the social possibilities of that institution, as Habermas remarked in an important essay on the reformers of the German university: "Taking the perspective of an idealist philosophy of reconciliation, they attributed to the university a power of totalization that necessarily overburdened this institution from the beginning."¹² The attempt at a top-down reformation of the national ethos was doomed to fail, whatever the merits of *Bildung*, because the reformers neither understood the limits of the university as an institution, nor could they predict its turn to other aims in the future.¹³

Habermas's comment on the Idealist origins of the German university reminds us that the project of culture was always linked to the development of the nation-state, and that culture, despite its invocation of universalist values, was to be realized in the form of *national* culture. The ideal of culture emerged in Prussia in part because the German principalities lagged behind other European nations in their consolidation as a nation-state. The university provided an opportunity to promote this goal, and so to establish a national culture in preference to the usual importation of French *civilité*. While the German *Kulturstaat* may have been eager to sponsor the university for this reason, nothing like such a project was called for in either England or the United States; (in neither country was the university seen as the agent for producing national culture,) or *Kultur*. In addition to its longstanding function of training the ministry, the Anglo-American university was primarily devoted to investing a ruling elite of the aristocracy or *haute bourgeoisie* with a distinct cultural capital.¹⁴ The concept of culture as a national project did not successfully penetrate discourse about the university until much later—in fact, not until after the First World War, and not coincidentally just before the time in which literary criticism came to be reconceived as a university discipline.

If the concept of *Kultur* was only minimally significant for the development of the Anglo-American university, the German university did contribute a much more powerful ideal to its Anglo-American counterparts: *research*. In the German system, state sponsorship of an autonomous institu-

tion of scholarly research was justified because the ideal of culture was supposed to be realized through the teaching of the most distinguished scholars. The ideal of culture was linked from the beginning with the production of new knowledge, and not merely with cultivation of taste. In this respect, the German university was more modern than its Anglo-American counterparts, which by no means combined at this time the two functions of teaching and producing new knowledge. In that sense, we should probably speak of "disciplines" as a modern institutional form, the union of teaching and research functions in the university. Previously, university professors may not have pursued scholarship at all; or if they did, their scholarship might have been unrelated to their teaching in the university. Thomas Warton, for example, a professor of poetry at Oxford in the eighteenth century and the author of the first major history of poetry in England, lectured exclusively on Greek and Latin literature. The unity of teaching and research in the German university, on the other hand, implied that only teaching could translate new knowledge into *Bildung*.

Belief in the necessity of new knowledge and the cultural effects of teaching this knowledge sustained a powerful if temporary rapprochement between what Dilthey later recognized as the distinct disciplinary forms of *Naturwissenschaften* and *Geisteswissenschaften*. Knowledge of nature and knowledge of humankind were enclosed within the overarching program of culture, as defined by the discourse of philosophy. By the late nineteenth century, however, as Habermas further noted in his essay, "the empirical sciences that sprang from the womb of the philosophical faculty pursued a methodological ideal of procedural rationality that doomed to failure any effort to situate their contents encyclopedically within an all-encompassing philosophical interpretation."¹⁵ The ideal of scientific research thus overtook and displaced the pedagogic aims of culture when the "empirical sciences" came to represent that ideal exclusively. This displacement was all the more striking, given that prior to the nineteenth century very little research in what we would now call "natural science" was pursued in the university at all. Conversely, the normative category of empirical science could encompass all the forms of *Wissenschaft*. Hence, as we have already seen, the scholarly discourses that developed into what we now call the "humanities" were just as likely as the natural sciences to consider themselves "empirical"—but to call these disciplines "humanities" is, of course, anachronistic, as our concept of "discipline" now presupposes the distinction between the humanities and the sciences emergent in the nineteenth century. All of these disciplines, let us recall, were still comprised within the faculty of "philosophy."

One of the protohumanistic empirical sciences within this faculty, which no longer exists as such, can in retrospect be identified as crucially mediating the distinction between *Naturwissenschaft* and *Geisteswissenschaft*. This science was *philology*.¹⁶ Inaugurated in the 1780s as the study of Indo-

European by Sir William Jones, and developed as a new science of language by Bopp, Rask, and the brothers Grimm, its significance as a scientific discourse was firmly established by Humboldt, who produced major works of comparative philology (as well as the famous plan for the University of Berlin). By giving nations a kind of cultural origin in language, philology effectively fused the philosophical concept of culture with that of the *ethnos*. It translated the Idealist program of culture into an empirical discourse, which grew rapidly in the first decades of the nineteenth century and endured for more than a hundred years.¹⁷ Insofar as the philological method strongly affected research protocols in the other disciplines that we now call the "humanities"—classics, history, philosophy—it brought these disciplines into a close relation to the current standards of scientificity at the same time that it unified scholarly enterprises within a total view of the history of civilization or culture. One has only to invoke Hegel's philosophy of "universal history," in which the development of "spirit" is successively embodied in the *Volksgeist* of particular nations, to confirm the paradigmatic status of philology among the disciplines.

In his well-known account of the rise of philology, Hans Aarsleff notes its status as "the model humanistic discipline," which was also "factual, descriptive, classificatory, empirical, and comparative."¹⁸ Further, its identity as an empirical discipline was never perceived as incompatible with its reliance on archival or textual evidence. On the contrary, philology and related historical discourses arguably advanced a more plausible claim to empirical standards of verification than earlier arguments in moral philosophy, which often seemed deductive or speculative by comparison.¹⁹ Historical research did not necessarily require the kind of epistemological defense against empiricist or skeptical questioning that Kant sought to provide for morality or aesthetics. Throughout the nineteenth century, in fact, historical discourses made empirical claims complementary in kind and strength to those of natural science. Of course, historical discourses could maintain this claim to scientificity only insofar as they established *facts*. It was on the basis of determined facts that philology then sought to establish *laws* governing the regularity of linguistic change. In retrospect, one can see that this mode of argument deferred certain theoretical questions raised by the interpretation of textual evidence. These questions—denominated by the general field of the "hermeneutic"—first arose at the juncture between theology and historical discourse, and not necessarily in connection with philology. (It was much later still when the reading of "literary" texts could be considered a hermeneutic enterprise.²⁰) In the meantime, philology developed an empirical mode of procedure, in which literary texts were considered to be only one kind of evidence (not necessarily the most reliable) for propositions concerning the history of language.

Remarkably, philology was able to defend its claim to scientificity through

the end of the nineteenth century and beyond, and even to erect its theories alongside the powerful monument of Darwinian biology (as in the work of Max Müller). In *The Order of Things*, Michel Foucault presents this feat as an expression of the episteme: philology, biology, and economics rose to dominance as the "sciences of man" by developing techniques of historical interpretation, whose object might be the traces of Indo-European in modern languages, the fossil record, or the genealogy of the concept of "value," which Foucault sees as the object of "exegesis" through the whole of Marx's *Capital*.²¹ Darwin's invocation of linguistic evolution as an analogue for natural selection, and Müller's echoing of the analogy in reverse, to some extent supports the argument that techniques of historical interpretation are what secures a discipline's status. But unlike philology, neither biology nor economics disappeared in the twentieth century. The decline of philology is a conspicuous and puzzling fact, given its former status as a science (Aarsleff calls philology "an aberration" in the history of language study).

This decline is all the more surprising because philology's esteem among the *Geisteswissenschaften* was instrumental in establishing the ideal of research in the university. The humanistic disciplines roused the university from its dogmatic slumber by calling upon it to take up the production of new knowledge, and, in Germany, by attracting state sponsorship for this task.²² The humanists themselves undertook to bring the natural philosophers into the university. The association was at first to their advantage, but it also meant that humanistic scholarship had to sustain its identification with science at a time of rapid advances in the natural sciences and in technological applications that threw into relief the difference between the natural sciences and the humanistic disciplines.

The convergence of *Kultur* with an inclusive concept of *Wissenschaft* was very powerful in its effects, but ultimately unstable. In the later decades of the nineteenth century, philology began to move away from the biological analogy popularized by Müller, or the alternative Hegelian version of evolutionist philology espoused by August Schleicher.²³ This earlier version of philology, which was strongly linked to the program of *Kultur*, came to be regarded as dubious in the light of the "positivist" turn in nineteenth-century science, and the rise of more exclusive specifications of scientific method. A second phase of scientific philology, perhaps best represented by the German "neo-grammarians," attempted to set philology on solid scientific grounds by arguing that phonetic change could be described in terms of necessary laws; these laws no longer implied any overarching destiny of humankind, or a mission of *Bildung*. The link with *Bildung* was attenuated for philology, as for other disciplines. The task of "culture" could always be reclaimed by philosophy, but it came under increasing challenge from the "positivistic" disciplines.²⁴

In England and the United States, the philologists who trained in the German universities of the late nineteenth century returned to their home institu-

tions with a conception of their discipline more than ever prescribed by norms of scientificity, and much less concerned with culture. When universities and colleges began to organize disciplines into departments, beginning in the 1870s (Harvard created its language departments in 1872), it was the philologists who determined the direction and orientation of these departments. But the necessity of this development is not so obvious in retrospect, given the fact that teachers of rhetoric and belles lettres probably outnumbered the philologists. If the growing prestige of science enhanced the position of the philologists, this advantage was really the effect of a conjuncture, the coincidence of bureaucratic reorganization with a moment of heightened prestige for science.

The dominance of philology in the formation of the new departments confirmed the preeminence of language over literature as disciplinary object, at the same time that *both objects* continued to define different tasks of these departments. The division of language and literature into separate disciplines was no doubt prevented by the fact they were held together within the unity of the concept of *nationality*. It was the unity (or ambiguity) of "English" that permitted it ultimately to become the successor to Greek and Latin in the Anglo-American university.²⁵ For this reason the various attempts to separate language from literature bureaucratically proved unsatisfactory, even though the philologists often insisted on the absolute distinction between them, that is, on the difference between the science of philology and the nonscientific, belletristic study of literature.²⁶

The continuity of these early departments with the discipline of literary study in its current form is belied by the exclusion of literature from the central place in the early disciplinary field. One need only return to the first volumes of the *Transactions of the Modern Language Association* to see how thoroughly the public self-presentation of the language departments, and the protocols of research in these departments, assumed the study of language in preference to literature.²⁷ As we have already established, belles lettres was underdeveloped as a discipline in the nineteenth century, as a consequence of having been cut off from its roots in the discourse—moral philosophy—that formerly endowed it with sophistication and even scientificity. This underdevelopment disadvantaged belles lettres and thus literature itself when the moment arrived for the organization of disciplines into departments. English departments continued to employ lecturers to teach literature or belles lettres (as well as rhetoric) to the undergraduates.²⁸ But literature was excluded from full disciplinaryity by virtue of its internal exile, as the philologists came to dominate the teachers of literature within the structure of the department. This hierarchy was further institutionalized with the creation of graduate programs devoted increasingly to philological study. Departmental responsibilities and rewards were unequally distributed in relation to the two objects of study, language and literature.

Despite the confident affirmation of philologists such as Francis March

that "English should be studied like Greek," it was obviously impractical for "English" at the *undergraduate* level to be organized entirely as the study of the English language.²⁹ The very coexistence of language and literature within the same departmental structure created soon enough the possibility for a fusion of the two disciplines of *belles lettres* and philology, for a *philological study of literature*, at least at the graduate level. In a discussion at the 1887 MLA convention, James Morgan Hart went so far as to suggest that future professors of literature "will make it their business to lay down for us laws for the critical study of literature which will do for us what the laws of Grimm and others have done for language."³⁰ The invocation of Grimm's law was no doubt reassuring for the neo-grammarians in the audience, who revered it as a precedent to their own scientific approach to language. Nonetheless one wonders how the philologists thought to subject literature to the rule of such laws. If "the critical study of literature" for the philologists had little to do with "criticism," as the belletrists conceived it, neither did this new subject remain strictly philological. It was another discourse altogether—*literary history*—that enabled the philologists to extend their research methods to literature, even though these methods conspicuously failed to eventuate in "laws." Literary history provided even those who were not trained in philology with topics for "research": discovering the sources and analogues for literary works, (determining the development of forms and genres, establishing the canons of major authors, editing texts.) But to what extent could these tasks claim the status of science, however empirical or even "positivist" they often were?³¹ The extension of the philological method to literature entailed a certain risk to the very scientificity of that enterprise.)

By the 1890s, the curricular structure of literary study in the university was organized according to the period concepts of literary history, the same period concepts that organize the discipline today.³² By contrast, the discipline of "rhetoric and belles lettres" had been organized according to categories of *genre*, and with the aim of inculcating skills: speaking, reading, and writing.³³ The textbooks that anthologized literary works for "rhetoric and belles lettres" mixed older and recent works together, in no historical order, but with an emphasis on the use of recent literary works as models for imitation. Literary history abolished this anthological principle, along with its presentist bias, when it came to function as the matrix for both research and teaching. Its own anthological principle was, however, skewed heavily in favor of older work, and at the graduate level, in favor of the most remote literature in English, Anglo-Saxon. This peculiar skewing of literary history was determined, of course, by the necessity of fusing literary history with the research protocols of philology. Literary history had in fact never been a *discipline*. It descended from a mode of writing that was *antiquarian*, and that circulated in a kind of satellite relation to the university. It was scholarly without being institutionalized as the basis for a curriculum. Its empirical or

"scientific" credentials were established for the scholars of the late nineteenth century by virtue of its status as a *historical-philological* discourse, and to do literary history was not necessarily to do "criticism."³⁴ Literary history was concerned with establishing facts, for example, whether and to what extent Chaucer's *Troilus* was influenced by Boccaccio's *Filosofo*. The proper understanding of older texts might depend upon these facts; but literary history did not usually advance beyond defending older texts against anachronistic understanding; it stopped short of fully interpretive hypotheses, and its judgments of quality were usually merely assumed. The antiquarian project was often sufficiently absorbing in its own right to defer questions of meaning and value indefinitely. At the undergraduate level, the convergence of philological method with literary history reinforced a tendency already present in undergraduate pedagogy to overemphasize memorization of historical facts.³⁵ This is not to say that literary history was merely trivial in its concerns or results, but that it was difficult to devise an engaging undergraduate pedagogy based on this discourse.

For this reason, the belletrists continued to practice a version of their established pedagogy, even within the new curricular matrix of literary history. Nor did the new disciplinary mode exclude "criticism," even among the philologists who taught undergraduates; but the place of judgment within such a quasi-scientific discipline was somewhat uncertain. The professors, typically passed on received judgments about the great works of literature *along with* the facts of literary history, and as a consequence, value judgments were often reduced to a peculiar sort of fact. These judgments were not usually accompanied by an account of how they were determined, much less any inquiry into aesthetic questions generally. Supported by an examination system already oriented to the faculty of recall, this arrangement long prevailed in Anglo-American universities, at least until the inception of "practical criticism," which was conceived by reformers such as I. A. Richards as an attempt to reinvent a discourse of judgment neither positivist nor belletrist.

The decline of evaluative discourse, however, was not only an effect of the institutional hegemony of the philologists. It was overdetermined by the ongoing development of critical discourse outside the university. The problematization of evaluative criteria in post-Kantian or Romantic criticism had already to some extent undermined the basis for a *rational* discourse of evaluation, even as it inaugurated a very different, and perhaps more sophisticated, philosophical discourse of the aesthetic. It is my sense, however, that post-Kantian aesthetic discourse remained marginal to educational institutions, however essential it was to the development of nineteenth-century art forms. In the university, it was not philosophical aesthetics but *belles lettres* that was charged with the task of declaring the value of the "masterpieces.") A great discrepancy emerged between philosophical aesthetics and the dis-

course of the belletrists, who were forced either to recycle older moral or generic criteria of judgment, or to convey the mysterious quality of the "aesthetic" by means of intellectually dubious performances of appreciation.³⁶

Within the matrix of the literary historical curriculum, belles lettres continued to be represented, then, by a cadre of lecturers who saw their function as communicating an appreciation of literature, but who were as incapable of making their discourse scientific as they were perhaps disinclined. The cultivation of a refined or "humane" sensibility through the teaching of literature could be claimed as the special province of these lecturers (the "generalists," as Gerald Graff calls them), but this task was only weakly connected to the program of *Kultur* in its grand idealist form. (In addition, this division of labor between appreciation and factual discourse divided literature itself from literary history.) Literature was subjected to another sort of internal exclusion, one that the generalists were both to resist and to seize as an opportunity. Already discontent with their lot in the 1890s, they began to struggle with their philological colleagues over the aims and methods of literary pedagogy.³⁷ Graff has made this episode familiar to us as the recurrent conflict between the "scholars and the critics"; but the point I would wish to emphasize here is that the discourse of the "critics" (the belletrists) was too *undisciplined* to offer a serious intellectual challenge to the "scholars" (the philologists and literary historians). At the same time, the belletrists saw clearly that the extension of philological methods from language to literature often failed in the classroom to rise above a boring recitation of facts. This weakness of the scholars as teachers energized the belletrists, despite their marginal departmental status, and enabled them in the first decades of the new century to enlist the aid of literary critics in the journalistic sphere in a polemic against the scientized mode of literary study.³⁸

The institutional shape of literary study at the turn of the century strikes us today as both familiar and very unlike what we do now. Literary history held together in an unstable departmental equilibrium the two discourses of philology and belles lettres. It papered over the tension between language and literature as distinct objects of study, while moderating some of the effects of relegating the former largely to graduate study, the latter largely to the undergraduate curriculum. At the same time, the residual "rhetoric" that inhered in belletristic pedagogy was rapidly being developed into the new subdisciplinary form we now know as "freshman composition." I cannot here take up the question of why composition broke off from the hybrid discipline of "rhetoric and belles lettres," except to note that composition took up language as object in a way altogether different from philology.³⁹ The distinction between language and literature that both divided and joined belles lettres and philology was thus repeated within belles lettres, as the occasion of a new distinction between the teaching of literature and the

teaching of writing. But if it will not be possible here to pursue this further complication of our discipline's formation, it will at least be possible to underscore the fundamental incoherence at the origin of literary study as a discipline of the modern university.

A final question can be raised in contemplating the emergence of this highly unsatisfactory institutional arrangement in the 1890s, when four different disciplinary practices (philology, literary history, belles lettres, composition) came to cohabit under the roof of one department. This question concerns the demise of philology. We have seen that the formation of the modern disciplines was driven by the development of a principle of scientificity, and that the "humanistic" disciplines in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries assimilated versions of this principle into their disciplinary practice. But this arrangement did not prevail over the long term. The strength of philology must have concealed a weakness, after all, since it did not survive as a discipline both humanistic and scientific. If belles lettres was underdeveloped as a discipline, philology was, I suggest, *overdeveloped*. Müller's claim that philology held "the highest place among the Physical Sciences"⁴⁰ already testifies to this overdevelopment, which was intimately related to the underdevelopment of belles lettres. In other words, we must see the claims of philology in retrospect as enabled in part by its capacity to distinguish itself from the nonscience of belles lettres. This disciplinary conflict entailed a highly symptomatic consequence: the mutual exclusion of language and literature as objects of study.⁴¹

This division was, of course, already confounded in the 1890s by the institutional development of English departments, which united the two faculties of language and literature. Literary study internalized the fault line between the sciences and the humanities; that line crossed the center of its discipline, and indeed it became in some irrevocable fashion constitutive of the discipline. In drawing so severe a distinction between the study of language and the study of literature, (the philologists confirmed the positioning of literature already explicit in the public discourse of criticism, as represented, for example, by Matthew Arnold.) Precisely because it resisted scientific treatment, literature could be positioned in opposition to science, to industrial civilization, to modernity itself. In the eighteenth century, by contrast, literature was a thoroughly modern category for organizing discourse, because all writing was perceived as a medium of communication, and a source of empirical knowledge. Writing reported experience, and even fiction was subject to a certain empiricist norm, in the form of fidelity to human experience or human nature. By the end of the nineteenth century, literature came to be identified with the nonliteral or figurative aspect of language, and with the fictional speech act. Literature became the repository of whatever in language was resistant to scientific rationality; on this basis it was given the further task of signifying a resistance to science itself, to

modern civilization. Literature was opposed most of all to philology's attempt to reduce language to law. Foucault saw the importance of this development, which he noted cryptically in *The Order of Things*: "Literature is the contestation of philology (of which it is nevertheless the twin figure)."⁴²

If the philologists overextended their claim to scientificity, the extremity of this claim became apparent when empirically based historical discourses came to be sorted out from the "natural" sciences at the turn of the century, and when a generalized epistemological crisis of the disciplines drove a wedge between different discourses of the human world. It was during the period between 1880 and 1920 that "human sciences" such as sociology were effectively distinguished from the natural sciences on the one hand, and from the "humanities" or "cultural" disciplines on the other. Philology was ultimately disadvantaged by this reorganization of the disciplines, because it straddled the new spectrum of the disciplines. It attempted first to claim language as its scientific object; and then, in the form of a positivistic literary history, it claimed literature as well, the object that seemed to resist science by its very nature.

The predicament of philology highlights in retrospect the adventitious relation of philology to literary study, a result of the conditions determining the formation of university language departments. Because these departments were defined initially by the connection between language and *nation*, each one became the site for studying both the *general* science of language and a *particular* national language and its literature. This situation accounts for the peculiar position of Anglo-Saxon in the history of the discipline. For the philologists, Anglo-Saxon could be held up as an origin both for the English language and for English literature, and in this way philology could associate its discipline with the general aims of national culture. But with the decline of Darwinian and Hegelian versions of philology, this rationale was much attenuated. Moreover, the "national literature" that circulated as such in literary culture outside the university had virtually no continuous relation to Anglo-Saxon literary works; its canon usually began with Chaucer. The philologists were in any case more interested in studying Anglo-Saxon as a language than in conveying an appreciation of its literature. The relation between language and literature was an unresolved conflict within the composite and incoherent discipline housed by the department of English. This conflict has remained with us, as the residue of this incoherence.

In the end, the failure of philology to establish the study of literature on scientific grounds weakened its claim to scientificity, and perhaps cleared the way for a new science of language—linguistics—which took up some of the methods of the neo-grammarians, (but was no longer oriented chiefly toward the problem of linguistic change.) The emergence of a new science of language did not prevent philologists from producing interesting works of literary scholarship, but it did prevent philology from maintaining its hold on

language as its special or exclusive object. Even as linguistics emerged as a discipline in the first decades of the twentieth century, literature began to displace language as the primary object of the "language" departments.⁴³ After the First World War, the question of the relation between language and literature was reformulated by a transit through linguistics rather than philology. Anglo-American theorists such as Richards, and continental linguists such as Jakobson, raised the "contestation" between philology and literature to a new level of universality by (positing a profound contradiction in language between a referential function and an antithetical "poetic" function.) The problem of the relation of language to literature became the problem of "literary language."⁴⁴ Language was divided against itself, and literature became the name of its internal subversion.

The fate of philology may no doubt be read in the implications of the complex relation between language and literature as disciplinary objects, and for this reason we cannot say that philology declined only because its research program was exhausted (if indeed it *was* exhausted). The displacement of philology by linguistics is more mysterious, more involved with philology's adventitious and at the same time necessary relation to literature. Linguistics today has traveled very far indeed from its precursor discipline. As a "science of language," it is affiliated with psychology and neuro-physiology rather than literary study, with which it has almost no exchange. Looking back on this disciplinary history a century later we are compelled to acknowledge that literature has been made to play a kind of allegorical role in the development of the disciplines, as the name of the principle antithetical to the very scientificity governing discipline formation in the modern university. For this reason *belles lettres* was able to contend with philology, despite its institutional weakness. The decline of philology empowered the successor to *belles lettres*, literary criticism, to undertake an even bolder contestation of science; but criticism's repudiation of modern civilization was already deeply implicated in the category of literature itself.

NOTES

1. Gerald Graff, *Professing Literature: An Institutional History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987); Michael Warner, "Professionalization and the Rewards of Literature," *Criticism* 26 (1985): 1–28; and William Riley Parker, "Where Do English Departments Come From?" *College English* 5 (1967): 339–51.

2. See Frederick Rudolph, *Curriculum: A History of the American Undergraduate Course of Study since 1636* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1977), 39. On the development of moral philosophy into the culminating senior course in the American university, he writes, "Developing into a kind of capstone course that was wonderfully reassuring in its insistence on the unity of knowledge and the benevolence of God,

moral philosophy by mid eighteenth century had achieved a dominance over logic, divinity and metaphysics in the course of study."

3. See Thomas Miller, *The Formation of College English: Rhetoric and Belles Lettres in the British Cultural Provinces* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1997).

4. This claim is made by Franklin Court in his *Institutionalizing English Literature: The Culture and Politics of Literary Study, 1750–1900* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992). Thomas Miller (*The Formation of College English*, 304) excludes Smith from the narrative of origins on the grounds that he was not a rhetorician. From the perspective of my argument, what is most important about this moment is not that Blair was a professor of rhetoric and belles lettres while Smith was a moral philosopher, but rather that belles lettres derived from moral philosophy and not from classics. In his informative study, Miller wants to claim simultaneously that rhetoricians inaugurated literary study and that literary study (in the form of belles lettres) displaced a politically engaged rhetoric with a depoliticized disciplinary form. The point of this account is, so to speak, epideictic, to praise rhetoric and to dispraise literary study. But the new rhetoricians of the eighteenth century cannot be credited with originating literary study and held up as the champions of politically engaged rhetoric at the same time. As Miller knows, the new rhetoric was very different from the old, and quite compatible with the aims of belles lettres.

5. On this continuity, Frederick Rudolph (*Curriculum*, 53) writes, "Beginning in the 1760s the idea of the 'man of letters' as a proper definition of the college graduate intruded into the curriculum the study of belles lettres—orations, history, poetry, literature. An emphasis on reason and observation, on rational moral behavior, replaced a reliance on divine law in the study of ethics."

6. See Adam Smith, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, ed. J. C. Bryce (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983; reprint, Indianapolis: Liberty Classics, 1985), 55: "In some of our former Lectures we have given a character of some of the best English Prose writers, and made comparisons betwixt their different manners. The Result of all which as well as the rules we have laid down is, that the perfection of stile consists in Express<ing> in the most concise, proper and precise manner the thought of the author, and that in the manner which best conveyes the sentiment, passion or affection with which it affects or he pretends it does affect him and which he communicate[s] to his reader."

7. Wilbur Samuel Howell, *Eighteenth-Century British Logic and Rhetoric* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), 536–76.

8. While Hugh Blair is somewhat more latitudinarian than Smith in his tolerance for a diversity of prose style, the emphasis in Blair's work still falls heavily on the values of "perspicacity and precision." See Hugh Blair, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* (1783; reprint, New York: Garland Publishers, 1970), where he writes, "The exact import of precision, may be drawn from the etymology of the word. It comes from 'praecidere,' to cut off: it imports retrenching all superfluities, and pruning the expression, so as to exhibit neither more nor less than an exact copy of his idea who uses it" (69).

9. See Immanuel Wallerstein, et al., *Open the Social Sciences: Report of the Gulbenkian Commission on the Restructuring of the Social Sciences* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 6: "Sometimes called the arts, sometimes the human-

ities, sometimes letters or *belles-lettres*, sometimes philosophy, sometimes even just 'culture,' or in German *Geisteswissenschaften*, the alternative to 'science' has had a variable face and emphasis, a lack of internal cohesiveness."

10. Frederic Harrison, quoted in Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, ed. Samuel Lipman (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 28.

11. Bill Readings argues in his *University in Ruins* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996) that the old university of "culture," which he understands to descend from Humboldt down to recent decades, has been replaced by the new university of "excellence," of which the normative principles derive from corporate managerialism. The Anglo-American university, however, did not assimilate the German concept of culture until after the First World War, and then only very partially, in the form of "general education" programs that have been confined for the most part to liberal arts colleges and some elite universities. Already in the first decades of the twentieth century, Thorstein Veblen complained that the imposition of corporate norms on the American university was pervasive. See his *Higher Learning in America: A Memorandum on the Conduct of Universities by Business Men* (New York: B.W. Huesch, 1918).

12. Jürgen Habermas, *The New Conservatism: Cultural Criticism and the Historians' Debate*, ed. and trans. Shierry Weber Nicholsen (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989), 108.

13. On the subject of *Bildung* and its fate, see the superlative study by Fritz Ringer, *Decline of the German Mandarins: The German Academic Community, 1890–1933* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969; reprint, Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1990).

14. The exception here, and the principal context in which vernacular education was supremely important, was in preparation for England's foreign service. There it was a matter not of a national culture for England but of an imperial English culture for the colonies.

15. Habermas, *The New Conservatism*, 113.

16. Philology in the sense of the "study (or love) of language" is, of course, an old concept, appearing in both Greek and Latin texts, and importantly in medieval works (Capella's *The Marriage of Mercury and Philology*, for example). In the Renaissance, the new "philological" techniques developed by the humanists for the study of classical literature and the Bible responded to the fact of variation among surviving manuscript copies of texts. While these techniques were absorbed into the later discipline of philology, eighteenth-century philology was very different. It took the origins of modern languages as its chief subject and set out to make philology into a scientific discipline.

17. For a comment on the relation between language study and *ethnos* in the context of the recovery of Anglo-Saxon, see Hans Aarsleff, *The Study of Language in England, 1780–1860* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1967; reprint, 1983), 171.

18. Hans Aarsleff, *From Locke to Saussure: Essays on the Study of Language and Intellectual History* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 32.

19. Aarsleff remarks the difference between the eighteenth-century debate about the "origin of language," which was a major topos for moral philosophy, and the very different sorts of arguments about the origins of European languages in philology.

20. Hermeneutics, as the formal practice of determining a text's meaning, was developed in its modern form by Friedrich Schleiermacher, who was interested primarily in biblical interpretation. For an interesting recent argument tracing the major questions of literary theory to hermeneutics, see Andrew Bowie, *From Romanticism to Critical Theory: The Philosophy of German Literary Theory* (London: Routledge, 1997). I would propose a different genealogy, however, in which the important question to raise is why hermeneutics had such a belated effect on academic literary study.

21. Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Random House, 1970), 294–300.

22. Wallerstein, et al., *Open the Social Sciences*, 8.

23. For a brief account of August Schleier's Hegelianism, see April M. S. McMahon, *Understanding Language Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 319–21.

24. See Fritz Ringer, *Decline of the German Mandarins*, 296; also Fritz Ringer, *Fields of Knowledge: French Academic Culture in Comparative Perspective, 1890–1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 196.

25. I touch here, however briefly, on the cause of the unequal relation between English and the modern foreign languages despite their presumed institutional equality. English has a cultural function for the Anglo-American university that the foreign languages cannot have, even though they also inherit the same task of integrating language and literature into a coherent modern discipline.

26. On the ambivalent relation of the philologists to the study of literature, see Kenneth Cmiel, *Democratic Eloquence: The Fight over Popular Speech in Nineteenth-Century America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 179.

27. Perhaps the most telling document in the very first volume of the MLA transactions is the essay by H.C.G. Brandt, "How Far Should Our Teaching and Text-books Have a Scientific Basis?" *Transactions of the Modern Language Association*, vol. 1 (1884), 57–63. Brandt's essay is a kind of manifesto for the new discipline. He complains that there are still "teachers of modern languages, who do not realize, that their department is a science." But among the philologists, Brandt writes, demonstrating this fact "will hardly be necessary. I need only recall here such names as ten Brink, Sweet, Skeat, Scherer, the father of the 'Jung grammatiker,' though Saturn-like he would now devour his own children, Sievers, Paul, Verner, Braune, Kluge, Grober, Tobler, Forster, Neumann. We recognize these men as the foremost among those who have developed within the last fifteen years the old humdrum empirical treatment of living languages into the scientific study of them of to-day" (58–59).

28. Kenneth Cmiel (*Democratic Eloquence*, 178) reminds us that the philologists did not introduce English Studies, which, as we have seen, existed in the form of rhetoric and belles lettres, but that they successfully territorialized the departmental form.

29. Francis March's comment is cited from his report on the program in English at Lafayette College, in William Morton Payne, ed., *English in American Universities* (Boston: D. C. Heath, 1895), 75. This volume brings together descriptions by professors at twenty universities or colleges of their undergraduate and graduate programs. The essays were commissioned originally for an issue of *The Dial*, and they constitute an invaluable snapshot of literary study as it existed in 1894. Lafayette College's program is slightly atypical for the degree of its emphasis on language,

which can be attributed to the influence of March. For the philologist March, literary study means "the study of the language as it is found in masterpieces of literature" (76). That the study of language required the reading of "masterpieces" was simply taken for granted. Another very useful view of the early state of the discipline is provided by the first volume of *Transactions of the Modern Language Association* (1884), which prints several essays on the teaching of language and literature. Typical of these essays is James Garnett's "English and Its Value as a Discipline" (68), in which he states, "The teaching of language is as strictly *scientific* as that of any of the natural sciences."

30. Quoted in Michael Warner, "Professionalization and the Rewards of Literature," 4. The quotation is drawn from the Proceedings of the 1887 MLA convention. Similar views were expressed by Francis March in his *Method of Philological Study of the English Language*, published in 1879, and by Theodore Hunt in *Studies in Literature and Style*, published in 1890. In "English in the College Curriculum," *Transactions of the Modern Language Association*, vol. 1 (1887), 127, Hunt recommends the application "of Professor March's Philological method to the study of Shakespeare."

31. See James Morgan Hart, in "The College Course in English Literature, and how it might be improved," *Transactions of the Modern Language Association*, vol. 1 (1884), 91. Here Hart typically stretches the claim for the scientific status of literary history when he asserts that the influence of Boccaccio's *Filostrato* on Chaucer's *Troilus* had recently been given a "mathematical demonstration." One can see in Hart's recommendation for research on such topics as "the evolution of blank verse" that the concept of "evolution" here is not a casual metaphor but a deliberate analogical extension from the domain of philology, which borrowed it from biology. Hart advocates such scientific modes of scholarship in strong preference to the vacuous pronouncements of literary merit common in belletristic writing. The philological treatment of literary history also privileged older literature and established Anglo-Saxon in the premier position it was to have for some time to come. The bias against recent or contemporary literature survived long into the twentieth century, until the teaching of modern literature became a battlecry of the New Criticism.

32. Hart ("The College Course in English Literature," 88) stresses "the importance of teaching literature by *periods*."

33. It should be recalled here that Hugh Blair's *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* was used as a textbook well into the nineteenth century. The very first "Professor of English Language and Literature" (so-called), the Rev. Thomas Dale, appointed at the new University of London in 1828, delivered several sets of lectures on Dramatic Poetry, Epic Poetry, Divinity, the History of Romantic Fiction, and finally, the History of English Literature. Until the late nineteenth century, genre, rather than literary history, was the more usual organizing principle for the study of English literature. For a discussion of Thomas Dale, see D. J. Palmer, *The Rise of English Studies* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), 18–22.

34. The history of literary history has not been much discussed by scholars, despite its crucial significance in the formation of the discipline. The standard reference has long been René Wellek, *The Rise of English Literary History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1941). Our understanding of this subject has been updated and sophisticated with the publication of Jonathan Kramnick, *Making the*

English Canon: Print Capitalism and the Cultural Past, 1700–1770 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). Kramnick draws our attention to the largely forgotten debate between the public sphere critics and the literary historians of the eighteenth century over the judgment of vernacular literature. The modernist and even presentist bias of the critics was contested by mid-century literary historians such as Joseph Warton and Richard Hurd, who sought to establish scholarly standards for the reading of older works, and who in the process often came to value the vernacular “ancients” over the moderns. Kramnick thus backdates Graff’s conflict between the scholars and the critics to the eighteenth century.

35. D. J. Palmer, *The Rise of English Studies*, 23.

36. It seems evident that for better or worse, post-Kantian aesthetics disabled the discourse of judgment based on criteria, redirecting it toward inquiry into the nature of aesthetic response. Criticism might now work backward from response to judgment, but without the old guarantees provided by criteria, which Kant summarily dismissed in the *Critique of Judgment*. This post-Kantian discourse was, to be sure, more sophisticated, but the loss of criteria also had the effect of rendering expressions of judgment in many contexts merely ineffable. The discursive poverty of evaluative discourse gave rise to dubious pedagogic techniques, such as those of Cornell University’s Hiram Corson, for example, who famously advocated teaching literature exclusively by means of the “interpretive” recitation of passages from the masterpieces. See Hiram Corson’s contribution to Payne, *English in American Universities*, 60–65. Professor Corson, it should be remarked, was also a noted philologist, and for that subject he surely practiced another style of teaching altogether. He exemplifies the split between philology and belles lettres by embodying it, which should remind us that this split is a disciplinary phenomenon and not only an effect of personal inclinations or conflicts.

37. In Britain, the opposition was led by John Churton Collins, who published perhaps the most famous of the diatribes against philology and for the teaching of literature, *The Study of English Literature: A Plea for Its Recognition and Reorganization in the Universities* (1891).

38. See Gerald Graff, “The Generalist Opposition,” in *Professing Literature*, 81–97.

39. The contraction of rhetoric is evident in comments such as that of George E. Maclean of Stanford University, in Payne, *English in American Universities*, 159. “[T]he first duty of rhetoric,” he claims, “[is] that of teaching students to speak and write the English language correctly.”

40. Müller, quoted in Aarsleff, *From Locke to Saussure*, 35.

41. Hart (“The College Course in English Literature,” 85) typically emphasizes the “two radically distinct matters, viz. language and literature.”

42. Foucault, *The Order of Things*, 300. Cmiel (*Democratic Eloquence*, 165) also notes the narrowing specification of literature in the dictionaries of the nineteenth century, as literature ceases to denote “all learning” and comes to signify the imaginative genres. Cmiel also reminds us that at this point, oratory and history are excluded from the domain of literature.

43. The period during which philology successfully focused the profession on language exclusively was relatively brief, from perhaps 1870 to 1900. By 1904, the essays in *Transactions of the Modern Language Association* were almost all on liter-

ary historical subjects, that is, on literature. These essays were by and large still on older and more obscure texts; but several decades later, the preponderance of essays dealt with major works of literature from all periods.

44. We can appreciate the difference made by the reformulation of “literary language” as a linguistic question by contrasting what Jakobson means by literary language—a universal possibility of language use, the “poetic” function—with what Erich Auerbach means in his *Literary Language and its Public*—the written language of a particular culture, which is literary by virtue of being written, and not by virtue of being poetic.