

focuses on the construction of touristic destinations could profitably bring together Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, E. M. Forster's *A Room with a View*, and popular iconic and textual representations of Hawaii. Moreover, in extending the range of objects admitted into academic investigation, cultural studies can situate literary texts within the discourses that produce the objects, images, and texts that fill students' everyday lives. One of my colleagues demonstrates the complexity of Western representations of South Pacific otherness by pointing out continuities among figures of the cannibal in Melville's *Typee*, Paul Theroux's *Happy Isles of Oceania*, and a 1996 advertisement for the Polynesian Cultural Center. Some students note the ways in which oral narratives of the plantation both resist and reinscribe the rags-to-riches trajectory of many American novels and in turn how nostalgic images of the plantation past are deployed in local political campaigns in Hawaii. By examining one of the few genres that privilege the Pacific region—cyberpunk fiction—students can gain a nuanced understanding of the economic and political relations between the Pacific Basin and the Rim as well as raise vital questions about their own positions in the technological and transnational future. In order to counter the tendency in academic discourse on transnationalism to naturalize the scale of multinational corporations and their reach into global markets and labor pools, I have turned my close-reading skills to analyzing the ways in which the corporate history of Dole Hawaii draws on traditional narrative forms such as the bildungsroman to fuse individual, colonial, and corporate developments.

While I remain optimistic about the potential for cultural studies to enhance teaching and research in my department, I cannot forget that this work will be carried out within an institutional apparatus heavily invested in the reproduction of colonial relations. Perhaps the most significant challenge to cultural studies in Hawaii remains the fact that less than seven percent of the students at my university are Native Hawaiians. Since its beginnings in adult education programs in Britain, cultural studies has always had—and, I believe, must maintain—a commitment to ensuring open access to education, even as it seeks to transform teaching and learning.

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Many contemporary scholars have argued that literature is dead. More accurately, literature and the criteria that have upheld it have come under fire from literary and cultural theorists. At the same time, the recovery of "lost" texts and their writers has renewed interest in literature

and will continue to do so: for example, I am teaching Grace Lumpkin and Edwin Rolfe, two nearly forgotten mid-twentieth century writers, in a lower-level English class, and one of my graduate student colleagues is attempting to recover some seventeenth-century female epic poets.

The emphasis of cultural studies on music, art, film, and television broadens the field of literary inquiry. Borrowing methods of new historicism and cultural materialism, cultural studies attempts to look at different literatures and cultures in their historical, social, and political contexts (from postmodern and Marxist theoretical perspectives, respectively). In particular, the field has stimulated interest in "popular" literature past and present. Nineteenth-century Americans, for instance, read women's-magazine stories, dime novels, and sentimental novels that have been relegated to the dustbin of history. Similarly, present-day popular fiction, or genre fiction, has been denied a place in academic literary study mostly because of its lack of "literariness."

Genre fiction offers speculations on possible worlds. Genres like the romance provide a way to understand gender, the act of reading, and audience response. Tales of horror, fantasy, and science fiction posit utopian and dystopian visions of the past, present, and future. African American and women writers who practice these genres often question and reconceive the normative forms. Poppy Z. Brite, Melanie Tem, and Kathe Koja have rewritten the clichés of horror fiction (ghost towns, haunted houses, werewolves and vampires), giving increased importance to issues such as pain, desire, death, memory, and family. Elizabeth Moon and Mercedes Lackey have transformed the traditional male fantasy hero (usually straight and sexist). Moon's *Deed of Paksenarrion* cycle (1992) is a series of novels about a farm girl who runs away to become a mercenary and eventually a paladin. Lackey's hero in her *Last Herald-Mage* trilogy (1989–90) is a gay mage who becomes a powerful and legendary figure in his world's history. By broadening the field of available texts with which we can work, cultural studies has contributed much to the survival of literary study.

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## Interconnections

For much of this century literary studies has been successful at absorbing, even co-opting, all the theoretical

initiatives that might have challenged the fundamental assumptions sustaining its disciplinarity. From Marxism and psychoanalysis to feminism, poststructuralism, and deconstruction, every body of theory that might have desecralized the literary text has made its peace with the discipline and has found a way to install literary idealization at the center of its enterprise.

Cultural studies presents challenges to literary studies that both are and are not structurally similar to those put forward by other theoretical traditions. Its most significant challenge, radical contextualization, has been explicit or implicit in many of the methods literary studies has adopted, from traditional historiography to Marxism, structuralism, and semiotics. All these methods have had the potential to dissolve the individual literary text into its determining forces and discourses, but none has succeeded in doing so. Now cultural studies voices the call to historicize and contextualize, invoking a still-wider field of influences, but I doubt that the call will be heeded fully at first.

Yet cultural studies also proposes a different sort of threat to the status quo in literary studies—a radical multiplication of alternative object choices. Until now, English studies has been cautious in importing new primary objects of study. When films first entered the literature curriculum, for instance, they were aestheticized and their literary origins or components foregrounded. (Some cultural studies work idealizes the resistance potential in subcultural practices and production, but that idealization is political rather than aesthetic. But no progressive cultural studies scholar is likely to idealize the political speeches of Margaret Thatcher or Pat Buchanan.) The sheer number of potential objects and practices available to cultural studies makes the field inherently uncontrollable and only temporarily representable. A literature department that tried to represent the whole range of cultural studies interests and objects in its curriculum would soon be overwhelmed. New interpretive theories have, of course, been steadily integrated into the discipline, but the assumption remains that the theories are secondary, to be used in analyzing other phenomena. Which national and regional traditions, subcultural and ethnic constituencies, interpretive traditions, and categories of objects should a cultural studies program represent on its faculty? Should an English department make hiring an expert in John Keats or hiring one in Tokyo architecture its main goal for next year?

If other bodies of theory reconceive literature—psychoanalysis, Marxism, and feminism, for example, tend to see it in various ways as symptomatic rather than transcendent—cultural studies proposes to deny its centrality as well. Literature would merely be one of the discursive

traditions English departments studied, possibly along with some cultural practices that are nondiscursive. Already literature professors and doctoral students are writing books and dissertations where traditional literary texts make no appearance. The shift in research interests is under way and cannot be successfully resisted. The real crisis will come as pressure increases to replace literature faculty members and courses with cultural studies alternatives. The resentment that accompanied the turn to theory in the 1970s and 1980s may look mild by comparison. For we do not yet know what it would mean for the discipline to make cultural studies central and serve it fully, though it might mean that literature would no longer be our main preoccupation. Here and there across the country an administrator concerned about truth in advertising might think a department of English and American literature should be renamed.

As several of us argue in *Disciplinary and Dissent in Cultural Studies* (Routledge, 1996), the ideal relation between traditional disciplines and cultural studies is one of mutual critique and transformation. By bringing different kinds of discourses and objects of analysis into English, cultural studies presents the discipline with the possibility of making itself unrecognizable but also with the opportunity to give history its due. Although associated with contemporary popular culture, cultural studies has historical incarnations that can put literary texts from the past in their proper contexts of similar and dissimilar discourses and practices. Literary studies and cultural studies can make each other more thoroughly and deeply historical, in contrast to literary historiography, which for decades has been a refuge for those resistant to the theory revolution and has often served as little more than a genteel setting for veneration of authors. Increasingly international, cultural studies can also help literary studies reach beyond the nation-state, in a transformation that comparative literature has not successfully prompted in the literary disciplines. Literary and cultural studies are also implicit allies in the effort to open up the canon. On the other hand, literary studies can encourage cultural studies to give more-detailed attention to individual texts and practices and to recognize the value of traditional areas of study, undertakings some cultural studies scholars seem not to have the patience or training for.

The study of literature as a relatively autonomous tradition should be sustained and preserved. Literature has had an important history and retains unique powers in a variety of contemporary cultures. It is not in the discipline's best interest to replace Shakespeare with music videos or even with the more important topics cultural studies has recently addressed, such as the rise of the New Right and the psychology and politics of postcolo-

nialism. A serious dialogue between literary studies and cultural studies can benefit both.

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In the introduction to *Cultural Studies* ([New York: Routledge, 1992] 1–16), the monumental volume from the 1990 Champaign-Urbana conference, Cary Nelson, Paula A. Treichler, and Lawrence Grossberg state in passing that “although there is no prohibition against close textual readings in cultural studies, they are also not required.” A slightly grudging Venn diagram is being sketched out here: close readers can overlap with cultural studies if they must. “No prohibition”—whence a new formula for acknowledgments sections: “We thank cultural studies for generously giving permission for this book’s occasional dependence on a close reading.” To judge by the desk-sagging weight of the cultural studies anthologies that have appeared over the last few years, there won’t be much time, never mind inclination, for close reading anyway. This damning with faint inclusion occurs after a high-sounding reference to “the heritage of disciplinary investments and exclusions and a history of social effects that cultural studies would often be inclined to repudiate.” Close textual readings are the chosen illustration of this unfortunate heritage and history, singled out as more guilty than most of the exclusions and exclusiveness that cultural studies seeks to avoid. But after the sentence not prohibiting close readings, there comes a further charge: “Moreover, textual analysis in literary studies carries a history of convictions that texts are properly understood as wholly self-determined and independent objects as well as a bias about which kinds of texts are worthy of analysis. That burden of associations cannot be ignored” (2). Now the problem is not the way that literary analysis operates—through close reading—but the objects it operates on and the assumptions it makes about their conditions of existence and their value. And this time there will be no turning of a blind eye; this hangover “cannot be ignored.”

The authors of the introduction draw a nervous distinction between cultural and literary studies, ignoring the fact that the history of literary criticism is as diverse and contested as the practices of the rather younger discipline of cultural studies. It is as though cultural studies were afraid of being sucked into a celebration of Great Works at the very mention of the word *literature*. Analogously, literary studies seems to fear being swallowed up by an all-devouring, all-leveling new disciplinary force that refuses it the right to ask other than self-evidently social or political questions of its texts.

If cultural studies can represent itself as the locus of social critique, as opposed to a quiescent literary criticism forever closely reading its canon, disaffected literary people can identify with cultural studies as the cutting edge of what they see as their complacent discipline. But this is not a new formation for literary studies. Literary criticism has often been accused of being indifferent to cultural concerns, and there have always been tendencies in literary studies to open close reading: to make reading politically relevant or to place texts in frames wider than or different from those encompassing whatever are identified at the time as literary concerns. Semiotics was a field that situated literature as exemplary for examining how cultural meanings are made. Before that, sociology, especially Marxist sociology, promised to make literary studies political. With the advent of theory and then the “turn to history” in literary studies, sociology more or less dropped out of discursive sight, to be mentioned only as a distant domain of benighted number crunchers. Then along came cultural studies to assert the pertinence of contemporary social analysis, incorporating into its anthologies the work of writers historically associated with various forms of radical sociology.

In the work of such writers as Benjamin de Certeau, close reading of cultural texts becomes creative sociology: the reading changes the object, shows it up in a new perspective. Here is a place where cultural studies can and does meet literary studies on common, critical ground. By prompting unfamiliar questions and juxtapositions, close reading can discover and make connections between as well as within diverse texts. The objects of study may be imaginative writings, with a history of interpretations and with established cultural value, noncanonical writings, or writings from any cultural field where close reading may yield new perspectives not available through other methodologies. To use the same method in reading a poem, a newspaper editorial, and a piece of philosophy is not necessarily to treat literature of different kinds as the same sort of matter. Closely reading nonliterary writing doesn’t imply an aesthetic valuation of that writing any more than asking a cultural question of an established literary text implies that the text is no different in its history or its provenance from, say, an extract from a marketing textbook. Not all literary work is cultural studies, and not all cultural studies involves modes or objects of reading that are literary. But the area in which the circles cross can unsettle both fields in potentially challenging ways—as the awkwardness of “no prohibition” suggests.

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