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**WHAT WE TALK ABOUT  
WHEN WE TALK ABOUT ENGLISH STUDIES**

**by**

**Stephen Russell Beatty II**

**A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Philosophy**

**ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY**

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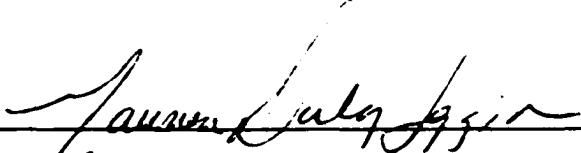
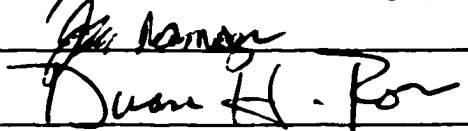
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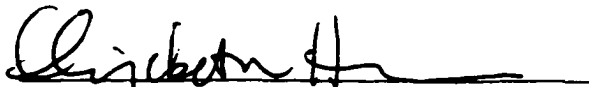

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## ABSTRACT

What defines English Studies? Even disciplinary practitioners struggle to answer this seemingly simple question. As Gerald Graff notes, “the quest for a precise definition of the discipline of English has been a persistent one since the founding of English Studies as an academic subject about a century ago.” Recently, however, this search for identity has taken on more urgency. “In many ways it seems that the quest for identity,” writes Sidney Dobrin, “has become the central mission of contemporary English departments.” While there have been numerous disciplinary histories of the major sub-disciplines of English Studies (linguistics, literature, composition, and creative writing), there is currently no history of the überdiscipline of English Studies.

*What We Talk About When We Talk About English Studies* attempts to shed some light on this question of disciplinary identity by providing a genetic history of the institutionalization of English Studies in the American college/university. As a genetic history, *What We Talk About* acknowledges diversity within the population being studied and uncertainty regarding genetic inheritance. *What We Talk About* does not provide a census, but focuses on certain institutions, scholars, and administrators at the expense of others in the belief that they represent the dominant genes of the institutionalization of English Studies.

In tracing the rise and institutionalization of English Studies, *What We Talk About* identifies the ideals underlying the adoption of English Studies as the four C’s—culture, citizenship, correctness, and capitalism. Two of these ideals, culture and citizenship, represent the ideals of the classical college, while the other two—correctness and capitalism—represent ideals more closely associated with the modern university.

**While the history of what we talk about when we talk about English Studies may not provide the conceptual coherence necessary to unify the discipline, it can help us to understand what we have in common, how we came to be organized the way we are, and, perhaps, help us to understand where English Studies might fit in the new corporate university.**

**DEDICATION**

**To**

**Mom and Dad,**

**Stacy,**

**Sam and Syd,**

**and Sparky**



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. John Ramage for the tough questions he asked. I'm not sure that I've answered them quite to his satisfaction yet, but I am certain that they have helped to improve my dissertation. I would also like to thank Dr. Duane Roen both for his comments on my dissertation and also for his tireless work to help graduate students prepare for the profession. And finally, I want to thank Dr. Maureen Goggin, who has been my mentor throughout this process. I could not have asked for a better chair. Your enthusiastic encouragement was the best kind of coaching. I found my topic in your class and followed your example in many ways. I cannot begin to thank you enough.

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## CHAPTER ONE

# INTRODUCTION: DISCIPLINING ENGLISH STUDIES

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*All histories are partial accounts, are both biased and incomplete.*

—James Berlin

*If looked at in its strategy of expression, a work of history can be found to present puzzles about language. If looked at for its sequences, it presents puzzles about time. And if looked at for the connections among its events, it present puzzles about causality.*

—Albert Cook

*What We Talk About When We Talk About English Studies* is a disciplinary history of English studies in the American college/university. Today, English studies is *de rigueur* in American higher education; however, that wasn't always the case. In fact, English studies has only been around for a little over a third of the nearly four hundred years of American higher education. In the beginning, English was forbidden in the American college. Latin and, to a lesser extent, Greek were the primary languages of instruction. It wasn't until the fourth quarter of the nineteenth century that English studies secured a place in the curriculum and the first language and literature departments appeared. Since that time, of course, English studies has evolved into one of the largest departments in the liberal arts and is typically composed of several sub-disciplines including linguistics, composition, literature, and creative writing, among others.

Surprisingly though, the story of the rise of English studies in American higher education has yet to be told. Even within the discipline itself, few practitioners understand how English studies came to be. During the past twenty-five years, there have been a number of disciplinary histories written about the sub-disciplines that compose English studies, but none about the überdiscipline itself. *What We Talk About* attempts to fill this gap.

### **A DISCIPLINARY HISTORY**

Disciplinary histories, writes Fuller (1991), require two historiographical approaches: (1) an internal approach to examine the growth of a discipline's knowledge and domain, and (2) an external approach to examine the adaptability of that knowledge to outside forces. Typically, the first approach is used by disciplinary practitioners who seek to legitimize a discipline and whose history recounts a tale of progress in the discipline's growth of knowledge from the misguided days of the past to the enlightened approach of the present. As Butler (1985) observes, "Inventing a tradition maintains your legitimacy and someone else's lack of it; your mystical path is your defensive strategy on a real present. . . . Though the invented tradition loudly insists on its own authority, it must be taken, not as authoritative, but as a polemic with particularly strong motives for hiding the circumstances which brought it into being" (39).

The second approach, popularized by Foucault, is generally used by outsiders whose analysis seeks to produce an archaeology of knowledge that de-centers humans as the agents of history. Instead, this approach focuses on underlying social, political, and economic forces (Poster 1997). Such histories tend to critique the discipline. Obviously, both approaches serve valuable functions. Legitimizing narratives help a discipline

establish its intellectual tradition and disciplinary boundaries, while critical histories provide alternative narratives that complicate the dominant disciplinary narrative.

*What We Talk About* attempts to combine these two approaches. Since there is no existing disciplinary history, my account necessarily establishes a series of events accounting for the rise of English studies. In this sense, it is a legitimizing history. On the other hand, by examining some of the social, political, and economic forces that impacted the discipline's formation, I try to complicate the narrative.

### **HISTORIOGRAPHIC METHOD**

In writing this history, I have attempted to keep two fundamental historiographical principles in mind. First, historians cannot recapture the past. As Berkhofer (1995) observes, there are always two histories—the actual past and our representation of it. While nineteenth-century historians once believed that by following Leopold von Ranke's famous dictum they could show the past “wie es eigentlich gewesen”<sup>1</sup>—a phrase usually mistranslated to mean “as it actually was” or “as it really was”—today it is a rare historian (and even rarer rhetorician) who would claim to write an objective history. Certainly, I make no such claim. On the contrary, I would argue that the past as it actually was is fundamentally inaccessible. In our postempiricist, postpositivist, postmodern world, the very notion of an objective history seems incredibly naïve. Indeed, twentieth century intellectual history can be viewed as an extended argument against the notion of objectivity.<sup>2</sup>

Second, neither the past nor the present are singular, which is to say that there isn't one past or one present but numerous pasts and presents. As Berlin (1988) writes, “All histories are partial accounts, are both biased and incomplete” (12). Disciplinary

histories, particularly those legitimizing histories written by insiders, often depict the discipline as monolithic. I claim just the opposite. The discipline of English studies is practiced differently at different institutions, and differently at the same institutions by different practitioners, and differently at the same institutions at different times.

With this in mind, I have tried to write what I term a genetic history. I've chosen the genetic metaphor because genetics acknowledge diversity within a population and uncertainty in regards to genetic inheritance. Similarly, I want to acknowledge that my history of English studies does not and cannot, in totality, capture the past or present disciplines of English studies. Nor do I make any claim of census. Instead, I have focused on certain institutions, scholars, and administrators at the expense of others. Sticking with the genetics metaphor, I believe that those I have chosen to study represent the dominant genes, if you will, of English studies.

For example, I focus on Harvard for a variety of reasons. To begin with, it was the first college in the American colonies. In addition, as Kitzhaber (1953) writes, “[f]rom 1875 to 1900 [the period in which English studies became a discipline], the most influential English program in America was Harvard’s” (33). Its President, Charles W. Eliot, is generally acknowledged as the most influential leader of the elective movement and college entrance examination requirements. And finally, Harvard’s required English A class became the model for required first-year composition courses throughout the country.

On the other hand, I have completely ignored English studies in the community college. I have only given scant mention of women’s colleges. And I have not discussed sub-disciplines such as speech communication, which originally resided in the English

department, and still do at a few institutions. Certainly, these narratives are also part of the history of English studies. *What We Talk About* does trace the rise of four sub-disciplines of English studies—linguistics, composition, literature, and creative writing. However, as my research focuses on the formation of English studies and not the sub-disciplines per se, *What We Talk About*, naturally, does not provide the depth of analysis found in the disciplinary histories devoted to a particular sub-discipline. Instead, such disciplinary histories have informed my work.<sup>3</sup> These sub-disciplinary histories provide additional and sometimes conflicting narratives to mine.

The historian Lee Benson uses E.M. Forster's famous distinction between "story" and "plot" to define historians. A story, Forster (1927) writes, is "a narrative of events arranged in their time sequence," such as, "The king died and then the queen died." A "plot" is "also a narrative of events, the emphasis falling on causality," as in, "The king died and then the queen died of grief" (47). A historian, writes Benson (1972), is a "plot-teller," (82) which is another way of saying that history is narrative and, therefore, rhetorical.

While calling for a more reflexive historicization, Berkhofer (1995) notes that "the function of normal historical principles is to conceal the true extent of the historian's intervention. The author tries to disappear behind the robes of an omniscient Clio as recorder of the past. For it is through the ideal of an ultimately single best or right viewpoint that professional authority is claimed" (229). To avoid such authoritative narratives, Hans Kellner advocates "getting the story crooked," which he explains as follows: "To get the story crooked is to understand that the straightness of any story is a

rhetorical invention and that the invention of stories is the most important part of human self-understanding and self-creation (xi).

In this history, one way I try to “get the story crooked” is by writing a recursive narrative. Time and again, chapters and portions of chapters will circle back to an earlier point in time. Hopefully, this will demonstrate the multiple narratives that exist of the past and present. Similarly, at the end of several chapters, I have included a timeline. Normally, such timelines create an illusion of steady historical progress. However, I use these timelines for another purpose as well—to complicate the earlier timelines and thereby illustrate the subjectivity of such creations. And finally, my genetic metaphor acknowledges that within the population of English studies, there is always variation. Just as red hair can appear in humans despite the fact it is a recessive gene, non-dominant forms English studies, such as those without first-year composition, have and will continue to appear at various institutions.

Nevertheless, even a crooked story, like a crooked road, leads somewhere. And as Crowley (1994) points out, a constructionist approach to historiography provides no more a guarantee of historical accuracy than an essentialist approach. No matter what, history comes down to narrative and narrative is rhetorical. Barthes writes: “Everything suggests . . . that the mainspring of narrative is precisely the confusion of consecution and consequence, what comes *after* being read in a narrative as what is caused by: in which case narrative would be a systematic application of the logical fallacy denounced by Scholasticism in the formula *post hoc, ergo propter hoc*” (qtd. in Megill 1989, 639).

In the end, it is you, the reader, who must construct your reading. My role is like that of a host who invites several people to a party. I’ve planned the party, written my

narrative of it, if you will. But, ultimately, each guest creates their own narrative of the evening. My job is to get the party started. There may be a fight; everyone may leave early; the neighbors may call the cops if we're too rowdy; or perhaps the party will last all night. Who knows? But in any case, this party is long overdue.

#### **CHAPTER AND VERSE**

Chapter Two, "What We Talk About When We Talk About English Studies" reviews the current dissensus that exists among practitioners on how to define English studies. In this chapter, I argue that one of the reasons English studies has been difficult to discipline is because it does not fit the discipline/paradigm models of Kuhn and Toulmin. However, despite its lack of a dominant paradigm, English studies has managed to carve out its own territory in the academy.

Chapter Three, "The Classical American College," examines the American college from its founding at Harvard in 1636 through 1828, the year of the Yale Report. It traces the roots of the *artes liberales* ideal that informed the classical American college from ancient Greece and Rome through the nineteenth century. It outlines the twin goals of the nine colonial American colleges, traces the expansion of the American college, challenges to the classical curriculum, the influence of the German universities, and the publication of the Yale Report.

Chapter Four, "The New Logic and Rhetoric," discusses the Ramée's redefinition of the domains of Aristotelian logic and rhetoric, the epistemological revolution of the modern age, and the introduction of *belles lettres*. It also examines the liberal-free ideal which would ultimately supplant the *artes liberales* ideal in American higher education.

Chapter Five, “The Rise of English,” outlines the introduction of the English in higher education as both the language of instruction and an object of study in the dissenting academies and Scottish universities during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It traces the shift from rhetoric to criticism and the appointment of the first university professor of English Language and Literature.

Chapter Six, “Importing English Studies,” traces the introduction of innovations in English studies from the dissenters, the Scots, the French, and the Germans in the American College. In addition, it reviews the rise of modern language studies outside the academy in America through 1828.

Chapter Seven, “Language and Literature during the Yale Report Years 1828 –1870,” examines the rise of modern language studies within the academy along with the inroads made in literary studies during the years between the Yale Report and the advent of the modern research university.

Chapter Eight, “The Transformation to the Modern Research University,” examines the shift from the classical American college and its ideals to the modern research university and its ideals.

Chapter Nine, “The Institutionalization of English Composition,” outlines the technological and pedagogical revolutions that led to the grammatocentric orientation of the modern research university. It traces the rise of entrance requirements and required first-year composition classes that resulted in the institutionalization of English Composition in universities across the country.

Chapter Ten, “Literature or What To Do with the Other 95%,” examines the rise of literary studies. It reviews how advocates of English literary study were able to



overcome the objections to English literature that had prevented its study in the classical college. And it outlines the conflict between the different approaches to studying literature.

Chapter Eleven, “Creative Writing: A Program for Creating Culture,” recounts how Creative Writing was institutionalized as part of a plan to combat the research orientation of philologists and literary historians.

Chapter Twelve, “A Look Back/Around/Ahead,” provides a brief look at English studies’ past, present, and possible future.

#### **A WORD OF WARNING**

In concluding this Introduction, I leave you with the words of the historian Linda Orr (1990): “Every writer should leave space to show how undefinable and traumatic her or his objects of study are, before rushing in to explain them. Every work of history needs a moment of uncertainty, a moment given over to the disarray, or rather, the still point of uncertainty” (160).

## CHAPTER TWO

# WHAT WE TALK ABOUT WHEN WE TALK ABOUT ENGLISH STUDIES

---

*It seems doubtful to me that English is now, ever has been, or ever will be a coherently defined 'discipline'. . . . What should concern us is not whether English studies is a discipline, but whether English studies is conceptually coherent.*

—Gerard Graff

*Of course there is no discipline in the English department. It is a collection of disparate activities with multiple objects of inquiry, vaguely articulated methodologies, and diverse notions of proof. Whatever arrangement exists among its competing scholarly, artistic, and pedagogical interests is a marriage of inconvenience, grounded not on any passion or admiration that would justify the union but on habit, historical accident, economic dependency, and perhaps anxiety about what people would think if we went our separate ways and whether we could actually survive.*

—James C. Raymond

*In many ways, it seems that the quest for identity has become the central mission of contemporary English departments.*

—Sidney I. Dobrin

### A DIFFICULT QUESTION

What defines English studies? Even disciplinary practitioners struggle to answer this seemingly simple question. In 1993, the Nineteenth Annual Alabama Symposium on English and American Literature posed the question as follows: “Is there a discipline in this department?” However, as James C. Raymond (1996) reports in his Introduction to the collected papers from the symposium, “If English is a discipline in any traditional sense, this symposium failed to define it” (1). Instead, he describes English studies as

“a marriage of inconvenience” between competing scholarly, artistic, and pedagogical factions whose union is based on “habit, historical accident, economic dependency, and perhaps anxiety” (1). Graff (1996) notes that “the quest for a precise definition of the discipline of English has been a persistent one since the founding of English studies as an academic subject about a century ago” (15).

### **THE PROBLEM WITH PARADIGMS**

Why has English studies proven so difficult to discipline? There are two primary reasons. The first and, perhaps, most obvious is that since English studies is not a science, it does not fit the familiar paradigm/discipline models described by Thomas Kuhn and Stephen Toulmin. In his landmark *The Structure of Scientific Revolution* (1962), Thomas Kuhn popularized the term *paradigm* for the goals, values, symbolic generations, analogies, metaphors, and exemplars shared by members within scientific disciplines. By so disciplining themselves, Kuhn wrote, scientists “learn to see the same things when confronted with the same stimuli” (193). The practice of everyday or, what Kuhn terms, *normal science* is carried out by disciplinary practitioners working to expand knowledge within a shared paradigm.

Paradigm shifts, writes Kuhn, occur as a result of scientific revolutions. These revolutions result when anomalies to the current paradigm reach crisis proportion and, consequently, call into question the existing paradigm. The crisis begins “with the blurring of a paradigm and the consequent loosening of the rules for normal research” (84). When normal science is unable to handle the crisis, scientists either set aside the

problem for the time being and wait for future advancements in the field or propose a new paradigm candidate.

Typically, proponents of the new paradigm claim that it can solve the problems that led to the crisis. And it is this issue, the question of which paradigm can best guide future research, which ultimately determines whether a paradigm shift occurs. The new paradigm, Kuhn notes, is often not only incompatible but also incommensurable with the old. Thus, when a paradigm shift occurs, conversion for individual members of the discipline is often difficult. "Like the gestalt switch," writes Kuhn, "it must occur all at once (though not necessarily in an instant) or not at all" (150). In effect, scientists must learn to see differently than they had before. Often, Kuhn admits, adherents of the older paradigm don't make the shift; they simply die off. Once the new paradigm is embraced by the discipline, the puzzle-solving work of *normal science* resumes.

However, while scientific disciplines normally work from a single shared paradigm, Kuhn states, *nonscientific fields* (note Kuhn doesn't refer to them as disciplines) do not. Instead, nonscientific fields are characterized by competing schools of thought that prevent them from reaching paradigmatic consensus. The "multiplicity of competing schools" and resulting uncertainty regarding progress associated with nonscientific fields, notes Kuhn, occur in science only during the "pre-paradigm period" or "during periods of revolution" (163). Lacking a shared paradigm, progress in nonscientific fields is problematic, according to the Kuhnian model. Such is the problem with English studies, writes Raymond (1996):

But as a matter of historical record, English has no paradigm. Or more precisely, it has had many paradigms, all of them continually in question. For this reason it is immune to what Kuhn called a paradigm shift. New criticism, structuralism, feminism, critical theory, and the new historicism have failed fundamentally and universally to transform the field because the field has never had even the provisional stability necessary for transformation to be noticeable. (8-9)

Raymond's observation that English lacks a single paradigm is nothing new. From its beginnings, English studies has been recognized as a disciplinary enigma. In 1911, William T. Foster wrote that while everyone agreed English should be a required subject, no one could say exactly what that subject was. Instead, he noted, "the general prescription of English is an agreement in name only; what actually goes on under this name is so diverse as to show that we have not yet discovered an 'essential' course in English" (qtd. in Graff 1996, 17).

Like Kuhn, Stephen Toulmin differentiates scientific disciplines from nonscientific enterprises. In *Human Understanding* (1972), Toulmin constructs a four-level hierarchy of disciplinarity. At the top of Toulmin's hierarchy are *compact disciplines*, such as physics and biochemistry, that share both "a sufficiently agreed goal or ideal" (364) and "a definite strategy and an authoritative body of contemporary theory" (383). A step lower on the disciplinary hierarchy are what Toulmin terms *diffuse or would-be disciplines*, e.g., psychology and other social sciences. At the bottom of the hierarchy are the so-called *non-disciplines* such as ethics and philosophy. And finally, at

the third level, halfway between the *would-be disciplines* and the *non-disciplines* are the *quasi-disciplines*, where Toulmin places literature (and presumably, the rest of English studies, with the possible exception of linguistics).

According to Toulmin (1972), the best way to differentiate the noncompact disciplines from *compact disciplines* is to examine the five features of a *compact discipline* and “then consider the various possible ways in which a potential discipline may fail to satisfy them” (379). The five features are as follows:

- (1) The activities involved are organized around and directed towards a specific and realistic set of agreed collective ideals.
- (2) These collective ideals impose corresponding demands on all who commit themselves to the professional pursuit of the activities concerned.
- (3) The resulting discussions provide disciplinary loci for the production of ‘reasons’, in the context of justificatory arguments whose function is to show how far procedural innovations measure up to these collective demands, and so improve the current repertory of concepts or techniques.
- (4) For this purpose, professional forums are developed, within which recognized ‘reason-producing’ procedures are employed to justify the collective acceptance of novel procedures.
- (5) Finally, the same collective ideals determine the criteria of adequacy by appeal to which the arguments produced in support of those innovations are judged. (379)

Accordingly, Toulmin (1972) rules out all but the “better-established physical and biological sciences,” “the more mature technologies,” and “the better-conducted judicial systems,” as compact disciplines (380), while consigning the social sciences, humanities, and fine arts to mere *discipline-wanna-be*'s (Goggin 1994).

The fine arts, writes Toulmin (1972), do not meet the standards of a full-fledged discipline because “[t]here is no single task engaging every painter or poet, composer or film-maker, as such—no shared ‘poetical’ goal or point of view (say) by which a man’s preoccupations *qua* poet are delimited” (398). He goes on to add that it is the “multiplicity of artistic aims that rules out all possibility of regarding any fine art as a ‘discipline’” (399). Rational enterprises, on the other hand, argues Toulmin, achieve disciplinary status “not merely by having *at least one* set of well-defined collective goals and selection criteria, but by having *one and only one* set of well-defined goals at a time” (400). Clearly, English studies fails this critical test. As Graff (1996) observes:

Over the now one-hundred year history of English, then, Germanic philology, literary history, and the New Criticism have made successive attempts to locate definitively the essence of the discipline and thereby bring order to an increasingly unruly array of interests, assumptions, and practices. At no time, however, have English professors restricted themselves to the supposed object or method stipulated by the disciplinary definition. Today, English seems further than ever from defining a common disciplinary project. (18-19)

Toulmin (1972) also notes that paradigmatic change occurs in compact disciplines in cumulative fashion “because the consensus over intellectual goals and selection-criteria imposes a corresponding continuity on the rational development of a discipline” (386). Change in would-be disciplines, on the other hand, is not cumulative but rather the result of pendulum swings between various schools.

The modern disciplines that emerged in the nineteenth century, write Shumway and Messer-Davidow (1991), were made possible by the development of new institutions and practices of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. One of the key factors in their development occurred at the turn of the eighteenth century as natural philosophy was broken up into independent natural sciences such as biology, chemistry, and physics while moral philosophy was split into separate social sciences such as economics, psychology, and sociology. Both the Kuhnian and Toulmin models of disciplinarity are based upon the natural sciences and reject the social sciences, fine arts, and humanities as disciplines due to their lack of homogeneity and orderliness among other things. The subsequent rise of science and the modern research university further solidified the position of the natural, and, to a lesser extent, social sciences in the academy. Interestingly, the term “humanities” was a twentieth century coinage for those disciplines excluded from the natural and social sciences.

However, as critics of Kuhn and Toulmin have rightly pointed out, the natural sciences are not nearly so homogeneous and well structured as Kuhn and Toulmin contend.<sup>1</sup> A discipline, like knowledge, is socially constructed. As Peter Novick (1988) observes:



Since no master cartographer ever laid out a map of academic disciplines, and the way in which knowledge came to be divided was usually the result of contingent circumstances and political struggles, the problem of establishing general criteria of what constituted a bona fide discipline had rarely arisen.

(578)

Indeed, Fuller (2002) argues that disciplinary models such as Kuhn's and Toulmin's are more about setting up boundaries and authorizing power than paradigms. In his study of disciplinary boundaries, Fuller (1991) writes that philosophers of science have failed to establish demarcation criteria that differentiate science from nonscience. Instead, philosophers have conferred epistemic privilege, i.e., disciplinary status, to those enterprises exhibiting what Fuller terms *Baconian Virtues*. Specifically, philosophers of science claim that the sciences (1) produce knowledge that maintains the social order and (2) that this knowledge and its creation is independent of the social order and other worldly influences. Or as Fuller (2002) put it, science has achieved its exalted status by "rhetorically drawing our attention to the fact that scientific knowledge represents the world and away from the fact that it intervenes in the world" (301-2). Thus, the sciences are accorded objectivity and the nonsciences are denigrated for lacking objective, i.e., scientific truth.

So it isn't surprising then that since the advent of the modern university, the sciences have typically won disciplinary border disputes. Literary study, on the other hand, writes Craige (1988), lost the position of authority it once held in the classical college, in part, because it consistently defined itself in opposition to science. The

subjective nature of the benefits of literary study—literary appreciation, insight into the human spirit, and literature’s purported civilizing effect upon the lower social classes—were no match for science’s claim to discover universal laws and objective truth.

As Shumway and Messer-Davidow (1991) note, boundary work is done either to protect a discipline from incursion or to justify a discipline’s expansion. It isn’t accidental that the typical metaphors used when discussing disciplines are geographical: “territories,” “fields,” and “frontiers,” that practitioners “annex,” “map,” and “explore.” It is an academic jungle out there, to continue with the geographic metaphors, and disciplinary survival is not guaranteed. Disciplines, writes Toulmin (1972) are “evolving ‘historical entities’, rather than ‘eternal beings’” (141).

The second reason English studies has proven so difficult to discipline is because English studies has avoided resolution, if not conflict, over competing views via growth and compartmentalization. Whenever new innovations, theories, or methodologies have come along, English studies has simply added them to the curriculum (without removing the old) as if they were new subdivisions in the English studies city. Such unrestricted growth enabled English studies to practice tolerance at the expense of disciplinary coherency and conceptual consensus. As a result, English studies, like the Holy Roman Empire, is more amalgamation than homogeneity.

At the Alabama Symposium, English studies seeming lack of disciplinarity did not bother some scholars. The opening line from the Gerald Graff (1996) quotation that serves as the epigraph for this Introduction, “It seems doubtful to me that English is now, ever has been, or ever will be a coherently defined ‘discipline,’” concludes with the

following assertion “but I do not find this troubling in the least” (11). However, Graff quickly adds that he is concerned that English studies and its diverse activities are perceived by students and other nonprofessionals as conceptually coherent. Others argue that conceptual coherence is neither possible nor desirable:

The goal of coherence facilitates a divisive process that not only fails to produce coherence but runs the very real risk of creating an atmosphere in which differences in point of view are not tolerated. To universalize a perspective is to ask that ‘reality-under-a-certain description’ be viewed as accommodating all possible descriptions of reality. (314-15)

The scholar-participants of the Alabama Symposium, however, were more concerned about the public’s perception of the discipline than possible intra-disciplinary conflict. Given the economic conditions facing departments today, their concerns seem well justified. After all, perceived conceptual coherence may not only assist a discipline in protecting its borders but also its dollars.

#### **ALTERNATIVE DEFINITIONS**

Fish (1996) argues that boundaries are critical to a discipline’s survival. To win space in the academy, Fish writes, a discipline must have a distinctive task that they are uniquely qualified to perform. While some scholars argue for blurring disciplinary boundaries and increased interdisciplinarity, Fish warns that such talk is dangerous and, ultimately, self-defeating. That doesn’t mean that disciplines can’t or won’t re-define themselves. However, no matter how a discipline defines itself, it must claim

distinctiveness if it is to remain viable. After all, as Larson (1977) observes, professions have historically justified themselves by claiming cognitive exclusiveness.

Warnock (1996) suggests that English studies define itself simply as the “teaching of reading and writing” (149), noting that is how others inside and outside the university understand English studies. Fish agrees, relating an incident with a drug store employee who, upon hearing Fish was an English major, looked at him in puzzlement for a moment, then declared, “Oh, verbs and adjectives!” (161). If Warnock is correct, Fish writes, “then we have a ready-made rationale for our existence, and we would be foolish to surrender it for no good reason” (161).

Warnock’s suggestion harkens back to another celebrated disciplinary gathering—the famous 1966 Dartmouth Seminar that brought together 50 American and British teachers to address the question “What is English?” The Dartmouth Seminar, organized by the Modern Language Association (MLA), the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), and the British National Council of Teachers of English (NATE), sought to define English as a subject and determine the best methods for teaching it. However, their participants, too, failed to reach a consensus regarding a definition of English.

The Americans sought to define English by its subject matter. Kitzhaber argued that they needed some means of joining language, literature, and composition together into a single coherent subject. James Britton, on the other hand, argued that the real question was “What do we want teachers and students to be doing?” These two opposing views became known as the American (Kitzhaber) and British (Britton) positions—the

former focusing on subject matter and the latter on teaching. In his history of composition since 1966, Joseph Harris (1997) reflects on how the British position has affected English studies:

In *Professing Literature* Gerald Graff traces much of the growth of English as a field to its tendency to absorb rather than confront dissenting views and methods. A result is that many departments end up as odd confederacies of new critics, deconstructionists, compositionists, new historicists, feminists, film theorists, and the like—with none of these specialists having much reason or occasion to speak with any of the others. My sense is that the dissenting view of English [the British view] articulated at Dartmouth has been coopted in a similar way. . . . Yet at the same time these concerns and practices have become accepted, they have also been marginalized as dealing simply with matters of teaching. . . . but otherwise the bulk of the work in most English departments continues on much as it did before. (13)

If Harris is correct, and I believe he is, then defining English studies as the “teaching of reading and writing” will not produce conceptual coherency. Besides, what English studies typically connotes to outsiders is not “reading and writing” or “verbs and adjectives” but grammatical correctness. The response I normally receive when people learn I’m in English studies is some variation of “Then I’d better watch what I say.” Such responses beg the question, do we really want to define English studies solely as grammatical correctness?

Yet another approach to disciplinary definition was advocated by Britton at the Dartmouth conference. Like Novick, he talks about disciplinarity as cutting out space, albeit with a twist in regards to English:

My mother used to make jam tarts and she used to roll out the pastry and I remember this very well—I can still feel what it is like to do it, although I have never done it since. She used to roll out the pastry and then she took a glass and cut out a jam tart, then cut out another jam tart. Well we have cut out geography, and we have cut out history, and we have cut out science.

What do we cut out for English? I suggest we don't. I suggest that is what is left. That is the rest of it. (qtd. in Harris 1997, 4)

However, defining English as leftovers, even if the leftovers are viewed as “the integrating area for all public knowledge” is neither appealing nor strategically sound advice.

And so the question remains, what is English studies? Or to put it another way, what holds English studies together? Is it mere institutional inertia? Is English studies simply, as Raymond (1996) writes, “a marriage of inconvenience” held together out of “habit, historical accident, economic dependency, and perhaps anxiety” (1)? Or are there other, invisible forces of attraction or objects of interest that, on some level, unify the discipline? Simply put, the question (with apologies to Raymond Carver<sup>2</sup>) is this: “What do we talk about when we talk about English studies?”

To answer that question, I began researching the history of English studies. And in so doing, I discovered a curious thing. While each of the various sub-disciplines of

English studies—rhetoric and composition, creative writing, literature, and linguistics—had been the subject of book length historical analysis (see Tables 1 thru 4), I found no history devoted to the überdiscipline of English studies.

Table 1  
Selected Histories of Rhetoric and Composition

Year	Author	Title
2000	Maureen Daly Goggin	<i>Authoring A Discipline: Scholarly Journals and the Post-World War II Emergence of Rhetoric and Composition</i>
1998	Sharon Crowley	<i>Composition in the University: Historical and Polemical Essays</i>
1998	Duane Roen, Stuart C. Brown, & Theresa Enos	<i>Living Rhetoric and Composition: Stories of the Discipline</i>
1997	Thomas Miller	<i>The Formation of College English: Rhetoric and Belles Lettres in the British Cultural Provinces.</i>
1995	John C. Brereton	<i>The Origins of Composition Studies in the American College (1875-1925)</i>
1993	Winifred Bryan Horner	<i>Nineteenth-Century Scottish Rhetoric: The American Connection</i>
1993	Michael S. Halloran and Gregory Clark	<i>Oratorical Culture in Nineteenth-Century America: Transformations in the Theory and Practice of Rhetoric</i>
1991	Nan Johnson	<i>Nineteenth-Century Rhetoric in North America</i>
1991	Susan Miller	<i>Textual Carnivals: The Politics of Composition</i>
1990	Albert Kitzhaber	<i>Rhetoric in American Colleges</i>
1990	James J. Murphy	<i>A Short History of Writing Instruction from Ancient Greece to Twentieth Century America</i>
1987	James Berlin	<i>Rhetoric and Reality: Writing Instruction in American Colleges, 1900-1985</i>
1987	Stephen North	<i>The Making of Knowledge in Composition: Portrait of an Emerging Field</i>
1984	James Berlin	<i>Writing Instruction in Nineteenth Century American Colleges</i>
1974	Arthur N. Applebee	<i>Tradition and Reform in the Teaching of English: A History</i>

**Table 2**  
**Selected Histories of Creative Writing**

Year	Author	Title
1996	D.G. Myers	<i>The Elephants Teach: Creative Writing Since 1880</i>
1980	Stephen Wilbers	<i>The Iowa Writers' Workshop: Origins, Emergence and Growth</i>

**Table 3**  
**Selected Histories of Literature**

Year	Author	Title
1998	Robert Scholes	<i>The Rise and Fall of English: Reconstructing English as a Discipline</i>
1994	David Shumway	<i>Creating American Civilization: A Genealogy of American Literature as Academic Discipline</i>
1989	Gerald Graff & Michael Warner	<i>The Origins of Literary Study in America: A Documentary Anthology</i>
1987	Gerald Graff	<i>Professing Literature: An Institutional History</i>
1986	Kermit Vanderbilt	<i>American Literature and the Academy: The Roots, Growth and Maturity of a Profession</i>
1985	Robert Scholes	<i>Textual Power: Literary Theory and the Teaching of English</i>

**Table 4**  
**Selected Histories of Linguistics and Speech Communication**

Year	Author	Title
1997	R. H. Robins	<i>A Short History of Linguistics</i>
1990	Julie Tetel Andresen	<i>Linguistics in America, 1769-1924: A Critical History</i>
1990	Gerald M. Philip and Julia T. Wood	<i>Speech Communication: Essays to Commemorate the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Speech Communication Association</i>
1985	Thomas W. Benson	<i>Speech Communication in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century</i>
1976	Robert A. Hall	<i>American Linguistics, 1925-1969: 3 Essays with a Preface to the Reprint</i>



The recent proliferation of histories of the sub-disciplines of English studies reflects a common sentiment among English studies practitioners of the need to re-examine our disciplinary roots. Now, I believe it is time to take the next step, i.e., to examine how these sub-disciplinary roots became entangled to form English studies. As Goggin (1999) observes, the roots of English studies “are so tangled with one another, to fully understand the disciplinary and professional formation of any one of these areas requires an understanding of all” (302).

### **THE HEART OF THE MATTER**

*What We Talk About* identifies the goals underlying the adoption of English studies as the 4 C’s: culture, correctness, citizenship, and capitalism. English entered the curriculum in Great Britain in order that the dissenters and Scots could achieve upward mobility. To do so, they felt they needed to speak with the correct accent and understand English culture. The Scots also studied English so that they could protect their economic interests in the courts of Great Britain. A successful capitalist professional required fluency in English. Transmitting culture and preparing the citizen orator were, of course, goals of the *artes liberales* ideal. Over time, the culture to be transmitted has been changed, but the notion of transmitting the proper culture remains the same. Similarly, the Greek and Roman goal of preparing the *bonus orator* evolved into the Puritan goal of preparing the Christian gentleman for church and state during the days of the classical American college. The notion of preparing students for citizenship still remains in the modern university today, though perhaps as an unstated goal of first-year composition and cultural and/or literary studies. While the knowledge of what we talk about when we

talk about English studies may not provide the conceptual coherence necessary to unify the discipline, it can help us to understand what we have in common, how we came to be organized the way we are, and, perhaps, help us to understand where English studies might fit in the new corporate university.

## CHAPTER THREE

# THE CLASSICAL AMERICAN COLLEGE

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*You shall take care to advance in all learning, **divine and human**, each and every student who is or will be entrusted to your tutelage, according to their several abilities; and especially to take care that their conduct and manners be honorable and without blame [emphasis added].*

—Harvard President Henry Dunster

*Whereas, the said trustees, partners or undertakers, in pursuance of the aforesaid grant, liberty and licence, founded a Collegiate School at New Haven, known by the name of Yale College, which has received the favourable benefactions of many liberal and piously disposed persons, and under the blessing of Almighty God has trained up many worthy persons for the service of God in the **state** as well as the **church** [emphasis added].*

—Yale's 1745 Revised Charter

Before the first American university, before the first Ph.D., before higher education featured writing, before there was an English department, before the first English class, before all of these things, there was the American colonial college. And it was a much different place, a seemingly distant ancestor to today's modern American university. Yet, like the genetic code passed down from one generation to the next, the characteristics of the American colonial college still shape its descendant today, long since its own demise.

### A PURITAN BEGINNING

Higher education in America began with the Puritan settlers of Massachusetts Bay. On October 28, 1636, the Great and General Court of Massachusetts passed legislation founding the first college in what would become America. A year passed

before further action was taken, but by the end of 1637, Cambridge had been chosen for the college, a committee of six magistrates and six ministers had been appointed as the college's Board of Overseers, and John Eaton had been selected as the college's master. Instruction began during the summer of 1638, probably in July or August. In September, a thirty-one-year-old Puritan settler named John Harvard died of consumption, but not before dictating an oral will leaving half of his property and his entire 400 volume library to the new college. In light of his generous bequest, the Great and General Court of Massachusetts named the college in his honor on March 13, 1639. Thus began Harvard and higher education in America.

In retrospect, it isn't surprising that it was the Puritans who instituted higher education in America. As Samuel Morison (1936c) noted, the Puritans prized learning more than any other segment of the English population. While other religious sects were suspicious of or hostile to education, the Puritans embraced education as a way to better understand God's Word and His Will. They believed every church, no matter how small, should have a minister who could read the Scriptures in the original Hebrew and Greek, and subsequent writings of religious leaders and philosophers in Greek and Latin. Furthermore, they believed each congregation needed to be educated as well, in order to better receive God's Word. Morison (1935) observed that "the two cardinal principles of English Puritanism which most profoundly affected the social development of the United States were not religious tenets, but educational ideals: a learned clergy, and a lettered people" (45).

As a result of their reverence for learning, the Puritans who settled in New England were an unusually well educated group. In fact, in 1640 the ratio of university-

educated men per family was higher in New England (1 to every 40 families) than anywhere in England. Incredibly, of the 113 university men in New England at the time, 71 lived in Massachusetts Bay.

Once they were settled, they wasted little time in establishing a college of their own. As the writer of a 1643 promotional pamphlet for the college wrote:

After God had carried us safe to New England, and wee had builded our houses, provided necessaries for our liveli-hood, rear'd convenient places for Gods worship, and settled the Civill Government: One of the next things we longed for, and looked after was to advance Learning and perpetuate it to Posterity; dreading to leave an illiterate Ministry to the Churches, when our present Ministers shall lie in the Dust. (qtd. in Morison 1935, 432)

Providing a learned clergy wasn't their sole reason for establishing a college however. Puritanism was not a religion that focused solely on the hereafter. Indeed, the Puritans believed they were called to do God's Will on earth as well as in heaven. Though they had fled England for the rugged frontier of the New World to escape persecution by the Anglicans, they had no intention of leaving civilization behind. As Morison (1936c) observed, these "New Englanders were no less English for being Puritans. A firm dedication to transplant English civilization as a whole was bound up with their desire to purify it in the translation of all 'corruptions,' in order that sober and God-fearing people of English speech might lead a life at once civilized and Christian"

(4). Civilizing the New World, they knew, would require an educated, or one might say, a *cultured* class.

Towards this end, they took a number of steps during the 1630s and 40s, establishing common schools, grammar schools, compulsory education laws, the Cambridge printing press, and, of course, Harvard. The early going was anything but smooth for the new college. At the start of the second academic year in 1639, Harvard's Master John Eaton was brought to court for assaulting one of his assistants. A number of other charges for brutality were brought forward against Eaton at that time, along with complaints that his wife failed to provide the students with beef to eat or enough beer to drink. Interestingly, the complaints against his wife's scrimping on food and drink for the boarders were seen as far more serious by the Board of Overseers and resulted in Eaton being dismissed from his post. Thus, one year after beginning instruction, Harvard closed (10).

Its founders, however, did not give up on the new college despite this major setback. Harvard was too crucial to their plans for the community. For, as Rudolph (1962) notes, they counted on Harvard to provide "the schoolmasters, the divines, the rulers, the cultured ornaments of society—the men who would spell the difference between civilization and barbarism" (6). So, one year later, on August 27, 1640, the Board appointed thirty-year-old Henry Dunster, a newly arrived graduate of Cambridge, as Harvard's first president. Dunster would prove an able leader who, more than anyone else, ensured Harvard's survival.

The dual goals of Harvard—providing educated religious and secular leaders—is reflected in the membership of the Board of Overseers—six ministers and six magistrates—as well as in the charge President Dunster gave to new board members during the seventeenth century: "You shall take care to advance in all learning, *divine and*

*humane* [emphasis added], each and every student who is or will be entrusted to your tutelage, according to their several abilities; and especially to take care that their conduct and manners be honorable and without blame” (Morison 1936a, 19). That colonial colleges were expected to produce statesmen as well as clergymen is also illustrated by the opening line of Yale’s 1745 revised charter:<sup>1</sup>

Whereas, the said trustees, partners or undertakers, in pursuance of the aforesaid grant, liberty and licence, founded a Collegiate School at New Haven, known by the name of Yale College, which has received the favourable benefactions of many liberal and piously disposed persons, and under the blessing of Almighty God has trained up many worthy persons for the service of God in *the state as well as the church* [emphasis added].

(Hofstadter and Smith 1961, 49)

Clearly, Yale, like Harvard, sought not only to transmit Christian values but also to prepare its students as statesmen. Thus, from its outset, the American colonial college’s dual aims were to transmit Christian culture and cultivate Christian gentlemen to lead church and state. The curriculum came directly from the English universities and was based upon the *artes liberales* (liberal arts) ideal. In order to truly comprehend the *artes liberales* ideal that informed the classical American college, we must go back even further to the ancient Greeks and Romans who originated it.

## **THE ARTES LIBERALES IDEAL**

### **The Greeks**

The origin of the *artes liberales* ideal dates back to the Greek city-states of the fifth century BCE.<sup>2</sup> It was during this time, the so-called “pedagogical century”

extending from 350 to 450 BCE, that the Greek concept of education underwent a fundamental shift, which, as Kimball (1986) describes in *Orators and Philosophers*, led to the rise of the *artes liberales* ideal. Previously, the Hellenic concept of education had focused on the pursuit of *arete* (excellence or virtue). “Central to this [the *arete*] program,” writes Kimball, “was the recitation of Homeric epic poetry, both to provide technical instruction in language and, more importantly, to inculcate the knightly mores and noble ethic of the culture” (16). By reciting the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, students learned both language skills and the values of the Attic-Ionian aristocracy.

However, in the sixth and fifth centuries BCE, the rise of democratic institutions, such as the assembly of free citizens, together with the flowering of Hellenic culture caused the Greeks to re-examine their views of education and culture (*paideia*). Two critical questions emerged: (1) How should free (*eleutherios*) citizens best be educated to participate in governing the city-state? and (2) How is culture best understood and transmitted?

The debate over the answers to these two questions resulted in three varied educational programs. One school of thought, advocated by Gorgias, Protagoras, Prodicus, Hippias, among others, took a very pragmatic approach to education, focusing on the skills involved in oratory. They sought to teach a kind of political *sophia* (wisdom)—an *arete* especially suited for the democratic Greek city-state where winning arguments determined legislative and judicial decisions—the art of persuasion. However, because their approach was viewed as advocating persuasion at the expense of truth, the Sophists, as they were known, were condemned by both Plato and Isocrates, the leaders of the other two major schools of thought.<sup>3</sup>



In addition to their opposition to the Sophists, Plato and Isocrates shared the belief that the key to Greek culture and education was the Greek term *logos*. As Isocrates (436-338 BCE) noted in *Antidosis*,

It was *logos* which enabled us to perfect almost everything we have achieved in the way of civilization. For it was this which laid down the standards of right and wrong, nobility and baseness, without which we should not be able to live together. It is through [*logos*] that we convict bad men and praise good ones. By its aid we educate the foolish and test the wise. . . . With the help of *logos* we dispute over doubtful matters and investigate the unknown. If we sum up the character of this power, we shall find that no significant thing is done anywhere without the power of *logos*, that *logos* is the leader of all actions and thoughts and that those who make most use of it are the wisest of all humanity. (qtd. in Kimball 1986, 269)

However, the term *logos* was inherently ambiguous, incorporating the meanings of both “reason” and “speech.” Though both Plato and Isocrates agreed *logos* should be the focus of education, they disagreed on what exactly *logos* denoted. As a result, the dispute over the proper meaning of *logos* became the central issue in arguments between the two camps about cultural issues in general, and education, in particular.

Advocates of what Kimball terms the philosopher tradition, such as Plato, believed reason was the essence of *logos* and hence the arts of mathematics and syllogistic logic should be the focus of education. Plato (427-346 BCE) argued that philosophy provided the ideal education. In doing so, he distinguished between *sophia* (wisdom) and *philosophia* (the highest, metaphysical truth). Like Socrates before him

and Aristotle after him, Plato believed that knowledge led directly to virtue. In *Nicomachean Ethics*, Plato's student Aristotle wrote that contemplation "is the highest activity, intellect being the highest element in us, and its objects are the highest objects of knowledge" (Crisp 2000, 1177a) and thus is the surest path to happiness. The philosopher tradition held that *arete* was obtained through the never-ending pursuit of *philosophia*, and knowledge was acquired via dialectic or logic not rhetoric.

Advocates of the orator tradition, on the other hand, such as Isocrates, Cicero, and Quintilian argued that "speech" was the essence of logos. Like the Sophists, the orator tradition emphasized persuasion and rhetorical technique. They believed the arts of rhetoric and grammar along with the skills required for speechmaking—composing, delivering, and analyzing—were the proper focus for education. Unlike the Sophists, Isocrates associated rhetoric with the traditional Homeric standards of virtue and noble character. The ideal orator, he argued, served as a role model to others by embodying the noble virtues.

Just as he criticized the Sophists for their amoral approach to rhetoric, Isocrates denigrated the philosopher tradition's endless pursuit of truth as useless speculation. Instead, he argued that the orator was the true philosopher seeing as the proof of philosophy is the ability "to speak well and think right" (Norlin 1928, 339). For Plato and the philosopher school, on the other hand, rhetoric and oratory were always problematic because their end was persuasion rather than truth.

Each school suspected the other of sophistry. Thus, Plato and the philosophers complained the orators relied upon unexamined tradition rather than analysis, while

Isocrates argued that philosophers were caught up in pointless speculation that had no relevance in everyday life:

For I think that such curiosities of thought are on a par with jugglers' tricks which, though they do not profit anyone, yet attract great crowds of the empty-minded, and I hold that men who want to do some good in the world must banish utterly from their interests all vain speculations and all activities which have no bearing on our lives. (Norlin 1928, 335)

Over time, Plato grew less critical of rhetoric, acknowledging that there can be legitimate rhetoric so long as it is used in the purpose of seeking truth.<sup>4</sup> Later still, Aristotle stated, "Rhetoric is an antistrophos [counterpart] to dialectic" (Kennedy 1991, 28). However, that is not to say that either Plato or Aristotle viewed rhetoric as the equal to dialectic or were converted to the orator ideal. Rhetoric might be a counterpart, but it was, in their view, a lesser counterpart, one dealing with specific situations as opposed to universal truths.<sup>5</sup> And both men remained firmly committed to the philosophical ideal of the eternal search for the highest truth.

It is important to note that all three schools of thought—sophist, philosopher and orator—were taught during pedagogical century. It is commonly thought that the classical curriculum comes directly from the Greek curriculum. But the truth is that the Greeks never settled on a normative curriculum. Though it can be argued that the subject matter of the so-called seven liberal arts was invented by the Greeks, they had no such listing of arts, nor was there ever a Greek "school" where a student might go to learn them. Instead, teachers traveled about and taught individual subjects.

## The Romans

Eventually, the Romans inherited the Greek debate between “reason” and “speech” (in Latin *ratio* and *oratio*). The Romans, unlike the Greeks, ultimately decided the debate, choosing the orator ideal of Isocrates. Varro (116-27 BCE), Cicero (106-43 BCE), and Quintilian (35-97 CE) viewed rhetoric as the supreme art (dialectic was merely a tool used to frame the argument) and the orator as the embodiment of the *vir civilis* (virtuous citizen).<sup>6</sup> For the Romans the goal of education was to produce *the bonus orator*—the perfect orator/model citizen.<sup>7</sup>

Our term “liberal arts” derives from the Latin *artes liberales*, whose first recorded usage is found in Cicero’s *De inventione* 1.35 in the first century BCE. The Latin term *liberales* is a translation of the Greek term “*eleutherios*.” For the Greeks, *eleutherios* implied two kinds of freedom: (1) political freedom to participate in the Athenian democracy and (2) the freedom afforded by wealth for leisure and study. The Roman term “*liberalis*” also implied both political freedom and financial well-being.

We cannot be certain when a consensus was reached as to *the septem artes liberales* (seven liberal arts)—Varro listed nine, Vitruvius eleven, Galen eight, Sextus Empiricus six, and Cicero didn’t make a list. However, somewhere between the 1st century CE and the 5th, when Martianus Capella (ca. 400 CE) originated the term in *De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii* (On the Marriage of Philology and Mercury), a normative curriculum of seven liberal arts, three language arts, and four mathematical arts was established.

According to Kimball (1986), grammar didn’t become a formal art until the second or first century BCE; however, its roots go back to the fifth century BCE and the

Greeks' study of language and literature. Grammar's roots also extend to musical education in ancient Greek poetry and thus were tied to ethics and history. In grammar classes, students not only studied the structure of language but also a canon of epic and hymnic poetry along with its *historia*, the context, allusions and mythical background associated with each text. Studied through late adolescence, grammar was the first liberal art in a Roman education. Our term grammar comes from the Greek term *gramma* for "letter." Later, using *littera*, the Latin word for "letter," Quintilian translated grammar as *litteratura* from whence we get our term literature.

The Greeks and the Romans solidified the *artes liberales* ideal, established Greek and Latin as the learned languages, and developed the seven liberal arts that formed the heart of the classical curriculum. Although, the emphasis varied between the orator and philosopher poles in various time periods, the *artes liberales* ideal informed the classical curriculum from the time of Isocrates and Plato through the American colonial college.

### **The Christians**

From the Romans, the oratorical ideal was passed on to Christians. Originally, Christians were suspicious of the pagan literature of the classical tradition of Greco-Roman culture. However, by the 5th century CE, the influence of church leaders such as Jerome (347-420) and Augustine (354-430) resulted in a growing Christian acceptance of classical letters. In fact, Jerome recounted a dream in which his love of classical literature resulted in the divine condemnation, "You are a Ciceronian, not a Christian" (qtd. in Kimball 1986, 40).

Augustine's *De Doctrina Christiana* (On Christian Learning) and *De Civitate Dei* (The City of God), written as the Roman Empire was falling, effectively reconciled, with

some reservations, rhetorical studies with Christianity. As a result, the *septem artes liberales* were embraced as the requisite education for the study of Scripture's higher truths. In adopting the oratorical ideal, Christians substituted Scripture for the traditional Homeric standards of truth and virtue while maintaining the ideal of oratorical eloquence. Indeed, *De Doctrina Christiana*, writes Charles Sears Baldwin, "begins rhetoric anew. It not only ignores sophistic; it goes back over centuries of the lore of personal triumph to the ancient idea of moving men to truth; and it gives to the vital counsels of Cicero a new emphasis for the urgent tasks of preaching the word of God" (qtd. in Golden, Berquist, and Coleman 1976, 68). Like Cicero, Quintilian, and Isocrates, Augustine believed the eloquent orator could affect change in an audience by persuading listeners of the truth.

At the turn of the 6th century, the Roman and Christian Boethius (480-524) set out to translate and comment upon the works of Plato and Aristotle from Greek into Latin. He wanted to show that the works did not contradict each other but were, in fact, compatible philosophically. However, he was imprisoned and executed before he could finish his task, having completed translating and commenting upon only two of Aristotle's three treatises on logic. Nevertheless, it is through Boethius that the Middle Ages gained access to Aristotle. His translation of philosophical terms provided a new philosophical vocabulary and his commentaries served as a model for later medieval schoolmen (Watts 1969, 13,14). He also coined the term the *quadrivium* (four-way road) for the four mathematical arts of arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy as the only road to philosophy. Boethius' own masterpiece *De Consolatione Philosophiae* (The Consolation of Philosophy) demonstrated his belief that only through philosophy and the speculative search for the highest truth could he transcend his imprisonment.

However, Boethius' early death and the neglect of *De Consolatione Philosophiae* for three centuries resulted in his influence being overshadowed by three other writers who championed the oratorical approach—Martinus Capella (ca. 400), Cassiodorus (484-584), and Isidore of Seville (570-636) whose handbooks solidified the *septem artes liberales* as the normative curriculum for centuries to come.

### **The Carolingians**

With the fall of the Roman Empire around the turn of the 6th century, education faltered, sustained only in a few pockets of learning. However, in the eighth and ninth centuries, Carolingian scholars would revitalize education. The catalyst of this revitalization was Alcuin (730-804), an English scholar educated in the oratorical tradition by the monks at York, who took his learning to Charlemagne's court.

There the Frankish nobles broke from their tradition of home schooling their sons with tutors to sending them to the monks to be educated. Charlemagne promoted education by improving existing schools and building new ones. He also established a palace school and selected Alcuin as its master. There, Alcuin instituted a curriculum revolving around the *septem artes liberales*. It was during this era, that Carolingian scholars introduced the term *trivium* for the language arts of grammar, logic, and rhetoric.

Kimball (1986) identifies seven characteristics of the *artes liberales* ideal and notes that all were present during the Carolingian era:

- 1) Trains good citizen-orators to lead society
- 2) Commits to a prescription of virtues and civic responsibilities
- 3) Relies on a canon of texts for moral and literary instruction
- 4) Identifies an elite who achieve merit as a result of their education

- 5) Accepts, without question, the virtues taught and canonical texts used
- 6) Emphasizes “good breeding” and “nobility of the mind” at the expense of tolerance
- 7) Views education as an end in itself

Characteristics one, four, and six focus on cultivating the *bonus orator*, while characteristic two, three, and five concentrate on transmitting culture and cultural values. Characteristic seven, writes Kimball (1986), illustrates the Carolingian accommodation of the oratorical ideal to Christianity by justifying an *artes liberales* education as preparation for scriptural exegesis rather than the individual refinement of the perfect orator.

This same *artes liberales* ideal informed the colonial American college, only with an even greater emphasis on Christianity. In the colonial American college, the goal was to produce Christian statesmen rather than the *bonus orator* and to transmit the values of the Christian gentleman rather than the virtues of the ancient Greeks or Romans.

#### **THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE UNIVERSITY**

Universities first appeared in the late 12 and early 13<sup>th</sup> centuries as various schools, encouraged by the Third and Fourth Lateran Councils in 1179 and 1215, incorporated themselves and adopted one of the standard terms for a guild, *universitas*. During this time, the guilds struggled to free themselves from ecclesiastical and municipal control. Eventually, universities won the right to run their own affairs, aided by the support of popes and monarchs, who granted scholars privileges and immunities usually reserved for clerics. One of the privileges traditionally held by the chancellor of the cathedral, the power to bestow the *licentia docendi*, the “license for teaching,” and charge fees for it, became a bone of contention between the new universities and



episcopal leaders. Once again, the popes came to the aid of the new universities, siding with them as a means of expanding papal control over local ecclesiastical prerogatives (Kimball 1986).

With the rise of the university as the *studium* of liberal arts, cathedral, collegiate, and parish schools were eventually reduced to the role of preparatory schools. A typical university included not only a faculty of the arts but also at least one higher faculty of law, medicine, or theology.

A student entered the university to pursue the title *baccalaurius* at approximately age 14. He spent three to five years attending lections (readings of lessons) on prescribed texts and topics in the *artes*. In addition, he attended and participated in oral disputations such as the *sophismata*, learning the dialectic method. Upon completing his studies and developing his skills in *responsiones* with his master, the student became a candidate for the title of *baccalauarius*. To be awarded the title, the student had not only to swear that he had completed his studies but also to appear before a board of masters to demonstrate his skills in a series of debates. If he was deemed qualified, he was then awarded the *baccalaurius* title and give the *cappa* to wear in recognition of his achievement (Kimball 1986).

The newly minted *baccalaurius* continued with his studies at the university for another one to three years (for a total of about six). He attended the same series of lections and sophistical exercises once again, and delivered his own lections on lesser texts and topics of the arts. Finally, he was ready for the *examinatio* for the *licentia docentia*. Once again, he appeared before a board of masters and swore he had completed his studies. In addition, this time he presided over a debate in which he “determined” the

resolution. If he were judged qualified, the masters then presented him to the chancellor to receive his *licentia*. However, receiving the license in itself did not make him a master of the arts. For that, he first had to be admitted to the guild, which sometimes required another series of debates, and always required that he swear allegiance and obedience to the rules of the *universitas* and that he hold a feast for his fellow members in the guild.

During this same time period, the scholastics started the pendulum back to the philosophical ideal. Spurred by the recovered texts of Aristotle, an influx of Middle Eastern texts on math and science, and the rise of the university, scholastics such as Abelard (1079-1144) and Thomas Aquinas (1224-1274) made logic the center of a liberal arts education, hailed philosophy and metaphysics as the pinnacles of instruction, reducing rhetoric to an afterthought and de-emphasizing the influence of the treatises of Martianus, Cassiodorus, and Isidore. Of all the newly translated works, the writings of Aristotle had the most import. Initially, Aristotle was welcomed into the curriculum due to his prestige and popularity with the 12<sup>th</sup> century schoolmen. However, as more of works became translated, his rationalism and humanism together with his disregard for Platonic metaphysics made Aristotle suspect in the minds of many religious leaders. In fact, there was an ineffectual attempt in Paris at the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century to proscribe his works. By 1255 the proscriptions had been revoked. Nevertheless, the debate between traditionalists opposed to Aristotle and those who supported his view continued.

At the crux of the matter were two very different approaches to learning. The Franciscan order of monks took the traditionalist approach—Platonic, Augustinian, and spiritualist—emphasizing revelation over reason, and subsuming philosophy into

theology. The Dominican order, on the other hand, sought to establish a more Aristotelian approach, an empirical approach emphasizing reason over revelation, and separating philosophy from theology.

With the traditionalists demanding the retention of the seven liberal arts as the frame of preparatory study for theology and the addition of new learning expanding the curriculum to the bursting point, something had to give. Ultimately, the argument of the Dominican Thomas Aquinas that the “seven liberal arts do not sufficiently divide theoretical philosophy” carried the day (qtd. in Kimball 1986, 66). Aquinas’s argument called for a more philosophical view of the *artes liberales*. In order to accomplish this, a consensus was required on defining and categorizing philosophy (while debate over Aristotle’s affect on theology continued into the 14<sup>th</sup> century). The accord they reached followed the Stoic-Augustinian-Isidorian division of philosophy into logic, ethics, and physics with the Aristotelian-based division of philosophy into natural, moral, and metaphysical. Aquinas and others outlined a five step educational program leading to theology: (1) *trivium*, (2) *quadrivium*, (3) natural philosophy, (4) moral philosophy, and (5) metaphysics. In so doing, Aquinas made logic the center of the *artes liberales*, severing the previous direct connection to ethics.

Aristotle and logic ruled the curriculum; however, paradoxically, grammar received a great deal of attention as scholars sought to discover a universal grammar. This new study of grammar called grammatical speculative, one of the *scientiae speculativae*, focused on schematic and “logical” rules for grammar, displacing the traditional handbooks that taught using examples from classical texts. Here again, the oratorical tradition was giving way to the philosopher bent.

By 1300, there were between fifteen and twenty universities in Western Europe. The philosopher tradition was firmly in control, while rhetoric and moral training were de-emphasized. In fact, *philosophia* was no longer merely one of the *septem artes liberales*, but had risen above them. The *trivium* and *quadrivium* were viewed as mere *scientiae speculativae* (speculative sciences) used to prepare students for advanced, specialized study. This was a 180-degree turn from the oratorical ideal that prescribed general study and viewed advanced study and specialization as indulgence.

The humanists of the Italian Renaissance sent the pendulum back in the oratorical direction. The recovery of Quintilian's *Oratoria* in 1416 and Cicero's *De Oratore* in 1422 helped re-establish the oratorical ideal. The humanist movement began outside of the university but gradually infiltrated the university as well. The most influential humanist was Desiderius Erasmus (1469-1536) whose *Declamatio de pueris statim ac liberaliter instituendis* (Declamation that children ought to be educated liberally from early youth) and *Institutio principis christiani* (Education of a Christian prince) championed the *septem artes liberales*, emphasizing literary grammar and rhetoric as the normative curriculum.

The leaders of the Protestant Reformation also preferred the oratorical ideal, favoring the rhetoric over logic. Martin Luther (1483-1546) criticized scholastic education and urged that the liberal arts be emphasized, asking, "Where are the preachers, jurists, and physicians to come from, if grammar and other rhetorical arts are not taught?" (qtd. in Kimball 1986, 92). Like Luther, John Calvin (1509-1564) preferred the oratorical view of *logos* and considered moral philosophy the paramount subject in the liberal arts.

During the same general timeframe, the knightly ideal of courtesy arose.

Baldassare Castiglione wrote that the knight should combine the roles of soldier and scholar. In England, Thomas Elyot combined Castiglione's ideal of courtesy with Erasmus's humanism to produce a gentlemanly ideal which combined humanism, courtesy, and Christian ethics to write *The Boke Named the Governour* (1531).

The gentlemanly ideal flourished during the first half of the 16th century as the numbers of young men entering European colleges rose dramatically. In England, the prospective college student typically began his studies by learning to read, write, and count via tutoring from the local clergy. Between the ages of six and ten, the student entered grammar school. Here the student was taught the *trivium*, albeit at a simplified level.

The *artes liberales* ideal flourished as the humanist influence took hold even at the grammar school level. The influence of Renaissance humanism into the curriculum is demonstrated by the popularity of Roger Ascham's *The Scholemaster* (1570) whose precepts were drawn from humanist principles and techniques, and which held up Quintilian's *bonus orator* as the grammar master's ideal. After four to seven years at a grammar school, the student entered a university, college, or academy. In England, Cambridge and Oxford (the only English universities until the 19th century) continued the liberal arts education with the goal of producing Christian gentlemen for the ruling elite.

This same *artes liberales* ideal can be seen in the earliest entrance requirements for Harvard that demanded "extempore translations of Cicero and ability to write and speak Latin *suo ut aiunt Marte* (by one's own skill) and a little Greek grammar" (Morison

1936c, 26). Later, President Chauncy would expand these requirements to include parsing “‘ordinary Greeke, as in the Greeke Testament, Isocrates, and the minor poets’” (qtd. in Morison 1936c, 260).

### **COLONIAL HARVARD COLLEGE**

Harvard’s founders modeled the newly formed college upon Emmanuel at Cambridge, England, the most Puritan of English colleges. The curriculum came directly from the English universities and followed the *artes liberales* (liberal arts) ideal as opposed to the scholastic course of the medieval *universitas*, focusing on logic and philosophy. Harvard followed the humanist approach and emphasized *bonae litterae* or classical belles-lettres. Of course, logic and philosophy didn’t disappear completely from the curriculum; however, language and literature (Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, that is) dominated the program of study. Indeed, until 1745 the only entrance requirements at Harvard were knowledge of Latin and Greek. At Harvard, writes Rudolph (1962),

The fundamental discipline was Latin—the language of the law, of the church, of medicine; the language through which translations of Aristotle from the Greek had dominated the medieval course of study; the language in which Aristotle’s three philosophies—natural, moral, and mental—entered the medieval universities. Taking its place beside Latin was Greek, the language of the new humanism, of Renaissance learning; it brought Homer and Hesiod, Greek lyrics and idylls, into the experience of the educated man.

So fundamental were these two languages and two literatures that until 1745 they were the only subjects in which applicants for admission to a colonial college were expected to fulfill entrance requirements. (25)

The curriculum at Harvard as well as the other colonial colleges was a product of the Reformation and Renaissance as well as the Greeks and the Romans. "Beside the Reformation ideal of the learned clergyman," writes Rudolph (1962), "was placed the Renaissance ideal of the gentleman and scholar" (23).

In its efforts to recreate Cambridge University's Emmanuel College at the new Cambridge of Massachusetts,<sup>8</sup> Harvard offered but two innovations to the English curricular model. One, the program of study for the A.B. was initially three years at Harvard rather than four. However, a fourth year was added by President Dunster in 1653. And two, in addition to Latin and Greek, Harvard's students also studied Hebrew, the language of the Prophets. The interest in studying Hebrew likely sprung from two sources. First, the Puritans desired Hebrew in order to be able to read the Old Testament without translation. In addition, medieval legend had it that the Hebrews had founded the first universities. Hence Harvard was often referred to as "the School of the Prophets" and her graduates as "the Sons of the Prophets." And second, and probably of more import, was the fact that Hebrew and oriental languages were President Dunster's speciality (Morison 1930).

A typical course of study over four years at Harvard would include Latin, Greek, Hebrew, logic, and rhetoric during the first year. The second year would continue with Greek and Hebrew, and introduce natural philosophy (what we would call physics). Year three would add mental philosophy or metaphysics and moral philosophy. And year four would review Latin, Greek, logic and natural philosophy, and begin mathematics. The emphasis and order might be slightly different at other colonial colleges, but the basic subject matter was the same.

The pedagogy of the colonial college was much different from today. Recitation was the primary method of teaching. Students were required to “read” certain books, memorize assigned passages, and then recite them during class. Students did not really read Latin or Greek texts *per se*, but rather memorized a grammatical or etymological lesson of some sort. This method of instruction dominated American colleges until late into the 19th century. Lymann Bagg’s description of a daily recitation in a Yale classroom of the 1860s would apply equally well to a Harvard classroom a hundred years earlier:

In a Latin or a Greek recitation one [student] may be asked to read or scan a short passage, another to translate it, a third to answer questions as to its construction, and so on; or all this and more may be required of the same individual. The reciter is expected simply to answer the questions which are put to him, but not to ask any of his instructor, or to dispute his assertions. If he has any enquiries to make, or controversy to carry on, it must be done informally, after the division has been dismissed. Sometimes, when a wrong translation is made or a wrong answer given, the instructor corrects it forthwith, but more frequently he makes no sign, though if the failure be almost complete he may call upon another to go over the ground again. Perhaps after the lesson has been recited the instructor may translate it, comment upon it, point out the mistakes which have been made, and so on. The “advance” [lesson] of one day is always the “review” lesson of the next, and a more perfect recitation is always expected on the second occasion;—a



remark which is not confined to the languages but applies equally well to all the studies of the course. (qtd. in Veysey 1965, 36-7)

In addition, students might be asked to conjugate verbs or parse constructions from the assigned reading or to declaim upon an assigned thesis. At the conclusion of his second year of studies at Harvard, an undergraduate became a Junior Sophister and began to take part in debates known as disputations. These debates pitting student against student were the mainstay of the medieval method at Cambridge and Oxford as well as Harvard.

Recitations, declamations, and disputations were supposed to produce "mental discipline" which in turn was to engender piety and strength of character. Educators believed that the faculties of the mind, like muscles, were best developed by vigorous exercise, in particular, the sort of "mental gymnastics" required to learn Latin and Greek grammar.

After having been certified by his tutor for having read certain books and having completed debates with credit, the Senior Sophisters underwent oral examinations. For two weeks from June 10th, they sat in a college hall for a couple of hours a day to be examined by "all comers" on the subjects of the curriculum. In theory, anyone with a Masters degree was able to quiz the candidates; however, in practice, it was typically the Board of Overseers who posed the questions. Upon passing this final examination, the Senior Sophister was awarded a first or bachelor's degree that gave him the right to be called "Sir" and the duty to read lectures and assist with the instruction of undergraduates. If he wished, he could continue his studies for three more years in either liberal arts or Divinity, if he wanted to be a clergyman, and obtain his Masters. As in England, the requirements for the Masters at Harvard were so slight that students were not required to

reside at the college. Indeed, there was a saying that all a Harvard man need do to earn his Master's was pay five dollars and stay out of jail (Morison 1936c).

The decision to grant degrees, however, was a bold move on the part of President Dunster and the Board of Overseers, as the conferring of academic titles was a jealously guarded prerogative of sovereignty, reserved for royalty or the pope. By granting degrees, Harvard raised itself to the level of university and its degrees were eventually recognized by Oxford and Cambridge as equivalent to their own. By 1654 Harvard had fifty or sixty students in degree programs. Students came from as far away as England to attend the college and its degrees were recognized by Oxford and Cambridge as equivalent to their own.

Like its English counterparts, Harvard promoted a liberal arts education as the mark of a cultured Christian gentleman. A century earlier, in 1531 Thomas Elyot published the first and most influential book on the gentlemanly ideal *The Boke Named the Governour*. In it, Elyot combined Catiglione's doctrine of courtesy, Erasmus's humanist educational theories, and Christian notions of personal virtue as the means to achieve to gentlemanly status. A liberal arts education was thought to produce men who, like the *bonus orator* of Isocrates, Cicero and Quintillian, would be the ideal statesman. The tremendous success of Elyot's work inspired many other books on the topic. As one might expect, the gentlemanly ideal appealed to Harvard's founders and students who were, after all, white, upper class males. In fact, what Lawrence Cremin noted as the three central themes of colonial education—piety, civility, and learning—correspond directly to Elyot's requirements for a gentleman (Kimball 1986).

However, there was one major difference between how Harvard and English universities were run. In England, the universities had been founded by groups of mature scholars and were self-governing. Harvard and the other colonial colleges were founded by communities and particular religious sects. Their faculty was mainly staffed by young, underpaid, and, often, transient tutors. Control over the colonial college remained in the hands of religious/community leaders. At Harvard, the Board of Overseers—six ministers and six magistrates—governed the college. It was the Board who fired Master Eaton for incompetence and in 1654 it was the Board who received, albeit reluctantly, President Dunster's resignation because of his religious heresy. Dunster came to believe that infant baptism wasn't scriptural and only adults should be baptized. This went against Puritan practice. The Board urged him to stay on, provided he keep silent about his religious views. To his credit, Dunster refused.<sup>9</sup> His resignation was a tremendous loss for Harvard and illustrates the importance placed upon religious orthodoxy within the colonial college (Morison 1936c).

#### **THE NINE COLONIAL COLLEGES**

By the dawn of the Revolutionary War there were nine colleges in America. Like Harvard, each was affiliated with a religious denomination (See Table 5). Harvard, Yale, and Dartmouth were Puritan (Congregational); King's (Columbia) and William and Mary were Anglican; New Jersey (Princeton) and Philadelphia (U of Pennsylvania) were Presbyterian; Rhode Island (Brown) was Baptist; and Queen's (Rutgers) was Dutch Reformed. All were patterned after the English universities. All served the aristocratic class. And all had low enrollments.

**Table 5**  
**The Nine Colonial Colleges**

College	Year Chartered	Religious Affiliation
Harvard	1636	Puritan
William and Mary	1693*	Anglican
Yale	1701	Puritan
New Jersey (Princeton)	1746	Presbyterian
King's (Columbia)	1754	Anglican
Philadelphia (U of Pennsylvania)	1755	Presbyterian
Rhode Island (Brown)	1765	Baptist
Queen's (Rutgers)	1766	Dutch Reformed
Dartmouth	1769	Puritan

\* Broome (1903) notes that though William and Mary dates its origin to 1693, it did not become more than a prep school until the new century.

By the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the colonial colleges were surviving but were neither as popular as the religious awakening of the 18th century nor as enticing as the potential of the frontier. Evarts Greene estimated that as of 1775 only one out of a thousand colonists had been to college at some time or other (Rudolph 1962). Indeed, as Rudolph notes, "Nothing about colonial America suggested that the college was going to become a characteristic American institution" (20).

#### **EXPANSION OF THE AMERICAN COLLEGE**

Nevertheless, the number of colleges in America rapidly expanded after the Revolutionary War. Nineteen existing colleges were chartered between 1782 and 1802. During the years from the end of the Revolutionary War until the beginning of the Civil

War, 507 additional colleges were founded. However, of these 507 only 182 were in existence as of 1861. President Lindsley of the University of Nashville observed, "Colleges rise up like mushrooms in our luxurious soil. They are duly lauded and puffed for a day, and then sink to be heard of no more" (qtd. in Tewksbury 1969, 23-4). Of the 173 surviving colleges founded between the Revolutionary and Civil Wars, 133 were founded between 1830 and 1861. This was the age of the denominational college as twenty different denominations had founded colleges within America. One unidentified contemporary observer noted that you could probably count on one hand the number of colleges prior to 1860 that weren't associated with a religious sect (Tewksbury 1969).

#### **CHALLENGES TO THE AMERICAN COLLEGE**

The colonial college curriculum did not remain totally static prior to the Revolutionary War. For example, at Yale math was only touched upon during the fourth year in 1726; however, by 1745 it was an entrance requirement along with Latin and Greek. And by 1766 math was taught during all four years at Yale (Rudolph 1962). At Yale and elsewhere, math, science, surveying, and navigation had displaced some of the colonial curriculum. However, the most systemic attempt to alter the curriculum occurred at the College of Philadelphia. There in 1756, with the support of the college's board and Benjamin Franklin,<sup>10</sup> Provost William Smith established a three-year program of study which devoted a third of the hours in science or practical studies. Significantly, this was the first colonial curriculum inspired neither by medieval tradition nor religion (Rudolph 1962). It foreshadowed the utility ideal that would become increasingly popular within American colleges after the Civil War.

After the Revolutionary War, a growing religious tolerance, the rise of science, a desire for more practical studies, an increased interest in modern languages, and the German university model founded on the pursuit of knowledge combined to produce unprecedented pressure for curricular change. Though the colonial college curriculum and the doctrine of mental discipline continued to be the foundation of American higher education, cracks were beginning to appear.

As Rudolph (1962) notes, during the 1820s there were numerous attempts at reform. In 1824 the founders of Lafayette College promised to include modern languages in the curriculum as part of their pitch to prospective donors. In 1825 Miami University (of Ohio) offered an alternative program to the traditional liberal arts curriculum called “English Scientific” in which modern languages, math, and political economy were substituted for the traditional subjects. A number of other schools followed a similar course. Typically, these alternative or parallel programs resulted in a certificate rather than a degree. The parallel program at Union College proved so successful that by 1829 it ranked third in enrollment in the United States and by 1839 was second to Yale. While most schools did not adopt a parallel program, most did begin to offer courses in modern languages and additional courses in math and science. The big four reformers of the 20s—Philip Lindsley of the University of Nashville, George Ticknor of Harvard, James Marsh of the University of Vermont, and Jacob Abbot of Amherst—all attempted and ultimately failed to reforms of the liberal arts curriculum in some manner.

Thomas Jefferson conceived the most ambitious of all the reform plans for his cherished University of Virginia, dividing it into eight schools: ancient languages, modern languages, mathematics, natural philosophy, natural history, anatomy and

medicine, moral philosophy, and law. And if there had been more funds available, Jefferson would have added the schools of commerce, manufacturing, and diplomacy. Students could take whatever courses from whatever schools they pleased. Each school gave its own diploma. However, the Jeffersonian experiment didn't last for long. By 1831, Virginia abandoned its no degree program, offering a M.A. in its place (Rudolph 1962).

### **THE GERMAN UNIVERSITY—PART ONE**

In addition to the reform movements at home, there were seeds of reform from abroad as well. The colonial and American colleges of the 17th and 18th centuries clearly followed the English models of Cambridge and Oxford. However, in the latter half of the 19th century a new exemplar for American higher education would emerge—the German university. Once again, Harvard led the way.

The first Americans to pursue graduate degrees in 19th century Germany were from Harvard.<sup>11</sup> In 1815 Harvard offered their most brilliant young scholar, the Reverend Edward Everett (A.B. 1811), the newly established Professorship of Greek Literature<sup>12</sup> and, in an unprecedented move, the Corporation arranged that he might study abroad for two years at full salary before commencing his responsibilities at Harvard. Four days after his twenty-first birthday, Everett sailed for Europe accompanied by George Ticknor, a recent Dartmouth M.A. admitted *ad eundem* at Harvard the previous Commencement. Everett and Ticknor studied at the University of Göttingen, Germany's most renowned university, where they were later joined by Joseph C. Cogswell, a Latin tutor at Harvard, and later still by George Bancroft, a Harvard graduate student on scholarship (Morison

1936c). Together these four were known as *die neuen Amerikaner* by the townspeople of Göttingen.

At the time, Germany was enjoying a renaissance. Its universities were the best in the world and offered an exciting new vision of scholarship to the young Americans. Unlike American colleges, in Germany, students did not go through the university as a fixed class and there was no fixed curriculum. Instead, students selected the courses they wanted and set their own pace. Instead of recitation, professors lectured in seminars. But perhaps the most notable difference between the American college and the German university was the scholarship of the German professors and students. While at Göttingen in 1817, Cogswell wrote an American friend, saying, “I am not in the least Germanized and yet it appals [sic] me when I think of the difference between an education here and in America” (qtd. in Hofstader and Smith 1961, 261). Noting that one of his professors had studied Greek for 16 hours a day for 18 years, Cogswell decided to drop Greek from his studies, despairing of ever knowing enough to be a true scholar. Nor was his professor’s diligence unique. Ticknor wrote in a letter (1815) to Thomas Jefferson that there was “an unwearied and universal diligence among their scholars—a general habit of labouring from fourteen to sixteen hours a day” (qtd. in Hofstader and Smith 1961, 258).

*Die neuen Amerikaner* imitated their professors. Everett only allowed himself six hours of sleep a day and Cogswell (1817) wrote of spending 16 hours a day on his studies. Even so, Cogswell noted that he despaired when he realized how little he knew. In the same letter to his friend, he noted:



For my own part I am sorry I came here . . . it makes me very restless at this period in my life, to find that I know nothing; I would not have wished to have made the discovery, unless I could at the same time have been allowed to remain in some place where I could get rid of my ignorance; and now that I must go from Göttingen I have no hope of doing that. (qtd. in Hofstadter and Smith 1961, 261)

While at the University of Göttingen, Ticknor was appointed to a new professorship of French and Spanish languages and of Belles Lettres at Harvard. Both he and Everett spent an additional two years in Europe and returned to teach at Harvard in 1919. Cogswell returned a year later and served as College Librarian and Professor of Mineralogy and Geology, and Bancroft returned in 1822 as a tutor in Greek.

*Die neuen Amerikaner* brought back with them a new vision of teaching and scholarship. Everett was a master of the lecture. According to Ralph Waldo Emerson, Everett's influence was "comparable to that of Pericles in Athens"; "the rudest undergraduate found a new morning opened to him in the lecture-room of Harvard Hall." His "precise and perfect utterance" affected even those unable to fully understand the "new learning" which he communicated with "ingenious felicity" (qtd. in Morison 1936c, 227). But though his lectures may have inspired students, Everett was no academic reformer. Indeed, he would oppose some of Ticknor's proposed reforms before leaving Harvard after five years to pursue a political career. Eventually, in 1846, after serving as Governor of Massachusetts and minister to Great Britain, Everett returned to Harvard as President. However, even then, he did little to reform the American college.

Bancroft, on the other hand, immediately set about reforming his classes in Greek along the lines of the German university. In an unprecedented move at Harvard, he organized his classes into sections depending upon the students' proficiency with the language and required more work from his more advanced students. A firm believer in self-discipline and rigorous study habits, Bancroft replaced the recitation system with the German lecture method. Despite student resistance, Bancroft's methods brought impressive results. His least proficient students proceeded faster than any other in Harvard history while his advanced section had to be slowed for fear they would cover the second year's requirements in year one. Nevertheless, both the students and the administration thought his methods were too intensive for Harvard. Frustrated by the lack of support from the administration, Bancroft left Harvard after a single year along with Cogswell to found an experimental secondary school based upon the principles of the German *gymnasia*.

Thus, within five years, only Ticknor remained at Harvard. Ticknor was especially interested in reform and only accepted the Smith professorship of belles-lettres with the stipulations that he be given the means to make his lectures as good as his talents and industry allowed, that he wouldn't have to use the recitation method of drilling students in the elements of language, and that he be permitted to live in Boston (Storr 1953). After a year and a half of teaching, however, Ticknor became so disillusioned that he approached the Corporation about reforming the college. However, since a large majority of the faculty opposed reform, the Board took no action. A student rebellion in 1823 prompted the Corporation to reconsider reform. In a meeting on July 23, 1823, with a Committee of Overseers and some interested faculty, Ticknor observed that "we are

neither an [sic]University—which we call ourselves—nor a respectable high school,—which we ought to be” (qtd. in Morison 1936c, 230). Ticknor went on to propose a number of changes including more emphasis on science, less on recitation, less on Latin and English, education for careers in manufacturing and science, and dividing the college into specialized departments (Rudolph 1962). As might be expected, the Board did not go nearly so far as Ticknor had hoped. However in 1825, they did approve his recommendations to reorganize the vacation schedule, to allow upperclassmen a slight concession to the elective principle, and, the most revolutionary reform approved, Law 61 which divided classes according to their proficiency as Bancroft had done with his Greek classes.

Unfortunately, Law 61 was opposed by most of the faculty and was eventually modified to be a faculty option. Though he was left free to experiment in his own department of modern languages, Ticknor eventually became frustrated in his efforts to reform Harvard and resigned in 1835.

Accordingly, Diehl (1978) writes that the influence of *die neuen Amerikaner* upon the institution of American higher education has been greatly exaggerated in historical accounts of American higher education. Indeed, he argues that the greatest achievement of *die neuen Amerikaner*—Cogswell’s collection for the Astor Library, the first advanced research library in America—was done outside the institution of higher education. Diehl is undoubtedly correct in regards to the immediate institutional impact of *die neuen Amerikaner*; nevertheless, they transplanted the seeds of German scholarship and reform in America.

## **MENTAL DISCIPLINE**

“The most prominent educational theory in American colleges up to 1870 was based on the ideal of mental discipline” (Kitzhaber 1953, 1). The theory of mental discipline was based on the writings of the Scottish “Common Sense” philosophers, which began appearing in America in the early nineteenth century. The “Common-Sense” school arose as a reaction against the rationalism and skepticism of eighteenth century philosophers such as Berkeley, Hartley, and Kant. The school’s name reflects the notion that these Scottish philosophers elevated common sense to the status of a mental power. Applying the theory of faculty psychology, Scottish “Common Sense” philosophers such as Thomas Reid divided the powers of the mind into two categories—mental and moral. Simply put, the theory of mental discipline held that the mind, like the body, was strengthened by exercise.

Common Sense philosophy and the theory of mental discipline was eagerly embraced by clergymen who’d been put on the defensive by recent developments in philosophy and science that challenged received beliefs. Using the faculty psychology of “Common-Sense” philosophy, religious leaders were able to mount a defense of orthodox religion. Similarly, the defenders of the classical American college (the vast majority of whom were conservative Christians) found an effective metaphor and shield against educational reform by arguing that the classical curriculum provided the most effective discipline of a student’s mental faculties.

## **THE YALE REPORT OF 1828**

Eventually, the clamor for reforming the classical curriculum reached Yale. In response to calls to abolish the “dead” languages requirement and establish a “new-

modelled” curriculum, President Jeremiah Day and Professor James L. Kingsley wrote the famed Yale Report of 1828.<sup>13</sup> Benjamin Silliman then published a shortened version of their report along with a seven-page endorsement from the Yale Corporation and his own prefatory remarks in *The American Journal of Science and Arts*. In the Yale Report, Day and Kingsley not only provided a spirited defense of the liberal arts curriculum (using the mental discipline defense) but also an attack upon many of the suggested reforms of the day.

Again and again throughout the report, the authors stress two points—the object of college is to lay the foundation of a superior education and the way to accomplish this is via mental discipline:

The two great points to be gained in intellectual culture are the *discipline* and the *furniture* of the mind; expanding its powers, and storing it with knowledge. The former of these is, perhaps, the more important of the two. A commanding object of the course, should be, to call into daily and vigorous exercise the faculties of the student. (Day and Kingsley 1828, 278)

The liberal arts curriculum, they argued, accomplished both and not by accident. In order to produce a “proper *balance* of character” (279) in the student, it was necessary to maintain the correct proportion in the curriculum between the branches of literature and science. Each discipline was thought to produce a certain benefit. “From the pure mathematics, he learns the art of demonstrative reasoning. In attending to the physical science, he becomes familiar with facts, with the process of induction, and the varieties of probable evidence” (279). And so on.

The study of the classic, the so-called “dead” languages, in particular, was “useful, not only as it lays the foundations of a correct taste, and furnishes the student with those elementary ideas which are found in the literature of modern times, and which he nowhere so well acquires as in their original sources;—but also as the study itself forms the most effectual discipline of the mental faculties” (289). The value of studying the modern languages, they wrote, paled in comparison:

To suppose the modern languages more practical than the ancient, to the great body of our students, because the former are now spoken in some parts of the world, is an obvious fallacy. The proper question is,—what course of discipline affords the best mental culture, leads to the most thorough knowledge of our own literature, and lays the best foundation for professional study. The ancient languages have here a decided advantage. (Day and Kingsley 1828, 290)

The Report also took shots at other suggested reforms. To those who argued that college should be more practical and prepare students for the professions, they replied that college was not designed to teach professional studies but rather “to lay the foundation which is common to them all” (281). A successful professional, they added, needed a balanced education “which requires various and extensive mental furniture.” To those who argued for an elective system, they replied that the “prescribed course contains those subjects only which ought to be understood, as we think, by every one who aims at a thorough education” (278). To those who argued for open admissions, they argued that admission standards should be higher otherwise the reputation of the institution would suffer. And to those who hoped to imitate the model of the German university,<sup>14</sup> they

replied, “We hope at least, that this college may be spared the mortification of a ludicrous attempt to imitate . . . [the German universities], while it is unprovided with the resources necessary to execute the purpose” (288).

With its publication under the title “Original Papers in relation to a Course of Liberal Education” in Silliman’s *American Journal of Science and Arts* in 1829, the Yale Report received widespread circulation and served as a rallying point for supporters of the status quo. As the most influential college of the era,<sup>15</sup> Yale was uniquely positioned to champion the traditional liberal arts curriculum. By re-validating the traditional liberal arts curriculum, the Yale Report staved off reform for over forty years, as few colleges were so bold as to challenge Yale.

Based upon the *artes liberales* ideal, the classical American college (See Table 6 for its characteristics) was an unreceptive host for English studies. However, challenges to classical logic and rhetoric, an epistemological revolution, the decline of religion, the rise of science, the expansion of the student body, and a pedagogical revolution would eventually transform the classical college into a more receptive environment for English studies.

**Table 6**  
**Characteristics of the Classical American College, 1640-1870**

<b>Purpose</b>	Transmit Christian culture & train the Christian gentleman for church and state
<b>Student's Goal</b>	Confirm one's respectable place in society
<b>Philosophy</b>	Christian
<b>Pedagogical Theory</b>	Faculty Psychology, Mental Discipline
<b>Curriculum</b>	Prescribed; Liberal Arts
<b>Method</b>	Oral (Recitation)
<b>Languages of Instruction</b>	Latin and Greek
<b>Faculty</b>	Generalists
<b>Student Body</b>	Upper class, white males
<b>Focus</b>	Undergraduate



## CHAPTER FOUR

# THE NEW LOGIC AND RHETORIC

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*The parts of the material which belong to the art of rhetoric are only two, style and delivery.*

—Pierre de la Ramée

*Let us suppose the mind to be, as we say, white paper, void of all characters, without any ideas; how comes it to be furnished? Whence comes it by that vast store which the busy and boundless fancy of man has painted on it with an almost endless variety? Whence has it all the materials of reason and knowledge? To this I answer, in one word, from experience. In that all our knowledge is founded, and from that it ultimately derives itself.*

—John Locke

### LOGIC AND RHETORIC IN THE CLASSICAL CURRICULUM

That the rise of English studies coincided with the fall of classical languages is well established; however, what isn't as widely recognized, and is equally significant, is that the rise of English studies also coincided with the diminishment of traditional logic and rhetoric. Logic and rhetoric were the heart and soul of the classical curriculum at the English universities that the colonial American colleges were modeled upon. Scholastic logic (which I will refer to as the Old Logic) followed the precepts of Aristotle and traditional rhetoric (which I will refer to as the Old Rhetoric) was based on the teachings of Cicero.

The tradition of scholastic logic in England dates back to Alcuin and continued into the later half of the sixteenth century. The Old Logic was viewed as both a method of enquiry and a means of communication to the learned audience. Students were taught

a set of received truths, based mainly on the teachings of Aristotle and Christianity. In logic classes, students learned the methods of deductive reasoning and how to test propositions for consistency. In philosophy classes, students were taught how to prove these truths (syllogistically) via disputation. The line demarking where philosophy ended and logic began or vice versa was fuzzy and the two terms were often used interchangeably (Howell 1971).

The Old Rhetoric was defined as the means of communication to the lay audience and focused on Cicero's five canons—*inventio*, *dispositio*, *elocutio*, *memoria*, and *pronuntiatio*, which dealt with invention, arrangement, expression, memory, and delivery, respectively. According to Cicero, rhetoric was the center of all arts, since it was through rhetoric that people are able to communicate with one another. People during the Renaissance shared Cicero's view of rhetoric's importance. Brian Vickers (1988) states that "during the European Renaissance—a period which, for convenience, I take as stretching from 1400 to 1700—rhetoric attained its greatest pre-eminence, both in terms of range of influence and in value" (qtd. in Herrick 1997, 150). Noting its central place in the curriculum, Don Abbott (1990) observes that rhetoric was "*the Renaissance subject*" (95). Indeed, the very notion of the Renaissance man, writes Donald R. Kelley, was based upon the oratorical ideal:

In many ways indeed the master of rhetoric fulfilled the idea of the **uomo universale** [the universal man] in moral and political as well as in literary and philosophical terms. The Orator, in other words, was the very prototype and paradigm of the Renaissance man. (qtd. in Herrick 1997, 151)

## RAMIST REFORM OF LOGIC AND RHETORIC

During the mid-sixteenth century, French philosopher Pierre de la Ramée, better known as Ramus, radically redefined the domains of logic and rhetoric. Ramée first drew attention in 1536 with his notorious M.A. thesis attacking Aristotle, although it should be noted that his attack was more an attack upon Aristotle's medieval disciples and so-called Aristotelian works rather than upon texts actually written by Aristotle himself (Howell 1971). His first two works on logic were viewed as radical and were suppressed for a time by royal edict. In addition, Ramée was prohibited from teaching philosophy. However eventually, thanks to the support of his friend the Cardinal of Lorraine, his works gained acceptance. In 1551, the Collège de France in Paris appointed him Regius Professor of Philosophy and Eloquence, a title he created (Rhodes 1998). Four years later, he published his most influential work *Dialectique* (1555), which called for the reform of the classical curriculum.

Basically, Ramée was disturbed by the redundancy he saw in the liberal arts curriculum in scholastic logic, traditional rhetoric, and conventional grammar. For example, students were taught invention and arrangement in both logic and rhetoric. Similarly, it didn't make sense to him that schemes and tropes were studied in both rhetoric and grammar (Howell 1971). To eliminate such redundancy, Ramée contracted rhetoric by moving invention (*inventio*) and *arrangement* (*dispositio*) to *dialectic*. In effect, this left rhetoric with only two of the traditional five canons—style (*elocutio*) and delivery (*pronuntiatio*)—since memory (*memoria*) was generally overlooked anyway with the advent of print (Rhodes 1998). Tropes and schemes were studied in rhetoric under style, while grammar was restricted to etymology and syntax.

Ramée's scheme also eliminated the traditional Aristotelian distinctions between logic and dialectic on the one hand, and dialectic and rhetoric on the other. Aristotle distinguished between logic, which was based upon truth and was associated with science and demonstration, from dialectic, a subset of logic that "reasons from opinions that are generally accepted." Cicero and the scholastics followed Aristotle in this distinction; however, in *Dialectique* (1555), Ramée boldly disagreed:

But because of these two species, Aristotle wished to make two logics, one for science, and the other for opinion; in which (saving the honor of so great a master) he has very greatly erred. For although articles of knowledge are on the one hand necessary and specific, and on the other contingent and matters of opinion, so it is nevertheless that as sight is common in viewing all colors, whether permanent or changeable, so the art of knowing, that is to say, dialectic or logic, is one and the same doctrine in respect to perceiving all things, as will be seen in its very parts, and as the Aristotelian Animadversions explain more fully. (2)

Thus, according to Ramée, logic and dialectic, were essentially one and the same.

And while Aristotle had distinguished rhetoric from dialectic in terms of audience and scope, Ramée defined rhetoric in terms of expression and dialectic in terms of method. For Aristotle, rhetoric and dialectic were two sides of the same coin. In Aristotelian theory, both rhetoric and dialectic begin with widely held opinions in an attempt to persuade an audience. The chief difference is that dialectic is used to convince a learned audience of general cases while rhetoric is used to persuade the general public in regards to specific instances (Herrick 1997).

Ramée, however, was determined to streamline the curriculum by eliminating overlap. That being the case, he could not assign discovery and invention to both dialectic and rhetoric. Instead, his solution was to divide the discovery and invention of any sort of argument (dialectic) from the art of expressing and delivering them (rhetoric). At the conclusion of the *Dialectique*, he writes that rhetoric is concerned with “all the tropes and figures of style, all the graces of delivery, which is the whole of rhetoric, distinct and separate from dialectic” (qtd. in Rhodes 1998, 24). Thus, under Ramée, rhetoric devolves from *techne* (practical art, a science, or systemic study) to mere technique.

Ramée’s reform of the classical curriculum diminished rhetoric by shrinking its domain. However, the canons (less memory) remained in the curriculum, they just were no longer duplicated under both logic and rhetoric. Ramée’s rhetoric was still the Old Rhetoric, only under his program it was Rhetoric Light, with just half the canons. Similarly, logic was still Old Logic, only now it was jumbo-sized and included both logic and dialectic. Ramée’s reforms restructured the classical curriculum in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Rhodes 1998).

While Ramée is chiefly noted for his radical restructuring of rhetoric and logic, education scholars also recognize him as a transformational figure who is responsible for not only the transition from humanism to the humanities but also for heralding “the age of standardized classroom teaching and the best-selling textbook (Grafton and Jardine 1986, 162).” Ramée wanted to shift the focus of education from logic and theology to dialectic and eloquence. His curriculum centered on grammar and dialectic. Ramée adopted the utility ideal of Agricola and Erasmus as his criterion for education.

As Grafton and Jardine (1986) observe, Ramée “deliberately discarded the difficulty and rigor of high scholastic schooling and thereby attracted those who regarded education as a means to social position rather than as a preparation for a life of scholarship (or of theological debate)” (168). His approach won the support of the French mercantile class who viewed their sons’ education as an investment in upward mobility.<sup>1</sup> The net effect was to secularize humanism and higher education, thereby changing the emphasis from moral improvement to skill development.

In regards to English studies, perhaps Ramée’s greatest influence was shifting rhetoric from logic toward criticism and promoting the vernacular by using modern poetry to illustrate principles of eloquence in the *Dialectique*. Although he wrote the *Dialectique* first in French, he then adapted it (and his name) to Latin (Ramus). He soon became one of the best-selling authors of the Renaissance. The first English translation of *Dialectique* was done by a Scot scholar from St. Andrews, Roland MacIlmaine in 1574. In his introduction, MacIlmaine, who studied under Ramée in Paris, wrote a vigorous defense of the vernacular (both English and Scottish).

#### **THE NEW LOGIC AND THE MODERN AGE**

Establishing precise dates as transitional moments in historical analysis is inherently problematic. As Young and Goggin (1993) note, “singling out a particular moment as a transition point from one period to another assigns it unusual significance; a danger arises when such focal attention results in ignoring or understating the complexity of events as well as trends that extend over a substantial stretch of time” (23-4). Certainly, there were a number of events that led to the transformation from classical college to university. However, it can be argued, and fairly convincingly, that the

classical college and *artes liberales* ideal were living on borrowed time from the moment Francis Bacon took pen and set out to reform natural philosophy, putting in motion the epistemological revolution that would define the modern age.

While Ramist reform of the seventeenth-century had restructured the domains of logic and rhetoric, the epistemological revolution of the eighteenth century altered the way knowledge was perceived and legitimized. As Crowley (1990) observes in *The Methodical Memory*, classical epistemology held that knowledge resided in the community. Accordingly, education was based upon existing communal knowledge. Claims for new discoveries were accepted only if they could be validated via syllogistic reasoning and were consistent with accepted wisdom. In other words, new knowledge was only accepted if it was consistent with received knowledge.

Francis Bacon (1561-1626), the author of the Preface to the modern age, though not the modern age itself, held a much different view of knowledge. Dissatisfied with what he perceived as the dormant state of knowledge, Bacon set out to reform natural philosophy. Unlike Ramée who sought to reinforce the union between theology and natural philosophy, Bacon advocated philosophy's autonomy (Gaukroger 2001).

Bacon firmly believed that knowledge was an instrument of the state. However, he also recognized that knowledge was stagnating under the two dominant scientific schools of the day: scholasticism, be it Aristotelian or Ramist, and alchemy. In a speech before the Queen Elizabeth entitled "In Praise of Knowledge," Bacon observed that

All the philosophy of nature which is now received, is either the philosophy of the Grecians, or that other of the Alchemists. That of the Grecians hath the foundations in words, in ostentation, in confutation, in sects, in schools, in

disputations. . . . That of the alchemists hath the foundation in imposture, in auricular traditions and obscurity; it was catching hold of religion, but the principle is *Populus vult decipi*. So that I know no great difference between these great philosophies, but that one is a loud crying folly, and the other is a whispering folly. The one is gathered out of a few vulgar observations, and the other out of a few experiments of a furnace. (Spedding 1890, 124)

He went on to note that while the great minds in the universities of Europe were engaged in either the “vain notions” of the Grecians or the “blind experiments” of the alchemists, the great inventions of the day—that of printing, artillery, and the magnetic compass needle—“were stumbled and lighted upon by chance” (Spedding 1890, 125). While Aristotelian natural philosophy focused on theory, Bacon was more interested in practical results.

Frustrated by the barren approaches of the Greeks (the *artes liberales* approach) and the alchemists, Bacon published the *Novum Organum* (1620) in the hopes of cultivating new knowledge via a new method that he outlined in its Preface:

Now my method, though hard to practice, is easy to explain; and it is this. I propose to establish progressive states of certainty. I retain the evidence of the senses, helped and guarded by a certain process of correction, but I shall reject, for the most part, the mental operation which follows upon the act of sense; instead of it I open up and set up a new and certain path for the mind to proceed along, starting directly from simple sense perception. Those who attributed so much importance to Logic no doubt felt the need for this; for they showed thereby that they were in search of aids for the understanding,



and had no confidence in the native and spontaneous process of the mind. But this remedy comes too late to do any good, when the mind is already, through the daily intercourse and conversation with life, occupied with unsound doctrines and beset on all sides by vain *idols*. And therefore that art of Logic, coming (as I said) too late to the rescue, and no way able to set matters right again, has had the effect of fixing errors rather than disclosing truth. There remains but one course for the recovery of a sound and healthy condition, namely, that the entire work of understanding be commenced afresh, and the mind itself, right from the very beginning, should not be left to take its own course, but should be guided at every step; and the matter must be carried out as if by machinery. (33-34)

Bacon recognized that logic alone was not the answer since the human mind is susceptible to various kinds of systematic error, which he termed “Idols of the Mind.”<sup>2</sup>

Bacon’s solution, though not a panacea, was a method, specifically, the method of eliminative induction.<sup>3</sup> Fed up by endless scholastic disputation, Bacon argued for a method of observation and experimentation that would lead to consensus rather than endless debate. Rejecting the Aristotle and the syllogism,<sup>4</sup> Bacon turned to induction. He believed that by submitting inquiry to the inductive method, the “Idols of the Mind” could be minimized.

Gaukroger (2001) writes that Bacon’s contribution “is not one to be described as lasting so much as irreversible” (221). He began the transformation of philosophy into science, replacing the contemplative individual philosopher with a community of scientists working together to expand knowledge by experiment and observation. In his

history of the Royal Society, Thomas Sprat eulogized Bacon by crediting him for the inspiration of this “Enterprise, as it is now set on foot. . . .” (qtd.. in Golden, Berquist, and Coleman 1992, 108).

If Bacon wrote the Preface to the modern age, then René Descartes (1596-1650) wrote the Introduction. Born in 1596, Descartes was 15 when Galileo published *The Starry Messenger* detailing his discovery of satellites circling Jupiter like the planets around the sun. At that point in late antiquity, writes Toulmin (1996), there were two groups of problems in physics that remained unsolved: the mathematics underlying bodily motion and the layout of the solar system. Galileo’s work in these areas challenged the orthodox notion of the earth as unique. Descartes, like Galileo, believed in the Copernican account of the solar system. More importantly, from Galileo, Descartes came to see mathematics as the theoretical basis for modern science.

Like Bacon, Descartes sought to reform natural philosophy by changing the method of inquiry. In 1628 Descartes attended a lecture in Paris where a chemist criticized Aristotle’s natural philosophy, contrasting it with his own chemical account of nature. The lecture was well received by everyone in the audience but Descartes. When Cardinal Bérulle, a noted Paris intellectual and religious leader, questioned Descartes about his disapproval, Descartes replied that he agreed with the chemist’s criticism of Aristotle’s natural philosophy but disagreed with the probable opinions the chemist offered in its place. Furthermore, Descartes added that he had devised his own method for separating truth from uncertainty. Bérulle encouraged Descartes to present his method to the world (Hatfield 2001).

In 1637 Descartes did just that with the publication of *Discourse on Method*. In *Discourse*, Descartes noted that although philosophy “has been cultivated for many centuries by the best minds that have ever lived . . . nevertheless no single thing is to be found in it which is not subject of dispute” (Haldane and Ross 1911, Part I). Like Bacon, Descartes was disillusioned by endless scholastic disputation. Reflecting upon his own education in logic and mathematics, Descartes observed that the syllogism was better suited for explaining what is already known than in producing new knowledge. As a result, he argued that a new method of inquiry must be found, one that could provide the consensus mathematics did.

The method Descartes proposed was based on four precepts. One, accept nothing as true that could not be verified. Two, divide all difficult problems into as many parts as possible. Three, begin with the simplest things and move step-by-step to the most complex. And four, make the enumeration so complete and reviews so general that any omissions would be avoided. Descartes’ method centered upon his faith in the power of reason to determine truth. He believed we must begin by deliberately doubting everything and then building upon that which is beyond doubt. For Descartes, the one thing he could not doubt was his own consciousness, as he stated in his famous words, “cogito, ergo sum” (I think, therefore I am). Or as, Masih (1963) puts it, “I may doubt anything but I cannot doubt that I am doubting” (37). Thus, the foundation for Cartesian logic was the existence of the individual mind.

Eager to convince others of his views, Descartes distributed copies of his *Mediations on First Philosophy* (1641) to a variety of philosophers and asked for their written objections, which were printed with the *Mediations* along with his responses.

Descartes' rationalism transformed the way we think. Leon Roth wrote that the *Discourse on Method* "marks an epoch. It is the dividing line in the history of thought. Everything that came before it is old; everything that came after it is new" (qtd. in Golden, Berquist, and Coleman 1992, 108). Not only did Descartes' mathematical method revolutionize our approach to science but his insistence on methodical rigor affects all disciplines (Weisman 1996). Still, Descartes, like Bacon, merely prefigured the modern age.

While Bacon may have written the Preface and Descartes the Introduction, it was John Locke who truly authored the modern age with *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689). Despite their groundbreaking work, Bacon and Descartes were still not accepted by defenders of scholastic logic. As Howell (1971) notes, Locke's *Essay* appeared at a time when Henry Aldrich's Aristotelian treatise *Artis Logicae Compendium* defended the old logic, arguing that Bacon and Descartes were not true logicians. However, once the *Essay* appeared, the modern age could no longer be denied.

The *Essay* was an instant classic, as indicated by its rapid adoption into the Trinity College curriculum as required reading less than two years after its publication. Not only was Locke's *Essay* a revolutionary work of science and philosophy but also a literary masterpiece, and, it is important to note, one written in English rather than Latin.<sup>5</sup> Like Bacon and Descartes before him, Locke was fascinated by the scientific advances being made. At Oxford, Locke belonged to a scientific group that included luminaries such as the scientist Robert Boyle and mathematician and logician John Wallis amongst its members in the late 1650s. In 1662 the group was officially chartered as the Royal Society of London. Six years later Locke was elected as a fellow of the Royal Society.

Locke's interest in the new philosophy dates back to his days as a student at Oxford and his reading of Descartes. Indeed, he acknowledges his debt to Descartes for "the great obligation of my first deliverance from the unintelligible way of talking of the philosophy in use in the schools in his time" (qtd. in Wozzley 1964, 10). However, he rejected Descartes' mathematical ideal for science as well as his views on innate ideas.

Again like Bacon and Descartes, Locke believed the scholastic approach to science and philosophy in vogue at the time not only inhibited knowledge construction but also enabled past errors to persist. He also recognized that the scholastic approach, which demanded that new knowledge must be consistent with what was already accepted as truth, did not reflect the way scientific advances were actually occurring. And so in the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689), Locke set out to describe how we come to know and understand the world we live in.

In the *Essay*, Locke provided an epistemological foundation for the New Science by examining how we acquire knowledge. Toward this end, Locke divided the *Essay* into four books. In Book I, Locke delivered his famous denial of the notion of innate ideas, which held that we are born with certain principals of morality and theoretical science, arguing instead that the human mind starts like an "empty cabinet" (I ii 15). In Book II, Locke compares the human mind to "white paper, void of all characters, without any ideas" (II i 2). How then does it become furnished with ideas? "To this I answer, in one word, from *experience*" (II i 2). All knowledge, he writes, comes from our senses or the internal operation of our minds. "These two are the fountains of knowledge, from whence all the ideas we have, or can naturally have, do spring" (II i 2). Book III concerns itself with the arbitrary nature of words and how language both helps and

hinders us in communicating our ideas. And finally, Book IV examines “the *bounds* between opinion and knowledge” (I, i, 3).

The effect of *Essay* and its companion text on logic *Of the Conduct of the Understanding*<sup>6</sup> can scarcely be overstated. Howell (1971) writes that these two works “were without question the most popular, the most widely read, the most frequently reprinted, and the most influential, of all English books of the eighteenth century” (277). Locke not only changed the way we looked at human understanding but also the way we thought about logic and philosophy. Before Locke the terms were often used interchangeably and connoted both a method of enquiry and a means of learned communication. Locke forever changed that by (1) associating logic with scientific enquiry as the means to establishing knowledge and (2) disassociating it from the transmission of ideas. With Locke, the role of philosophy also shifted from method of enquiry to a more critical, self-reflexive role. Meanwhile, the function of learned communication was relegated to rhetoric (Howell 1971; Lowe 1995). Finally, Locke was able to change the criteria for truth from correspondence with already accepted truths to accuracy with observed phenomena (Howell 1971).

David Hume (1711-1776), a disciple of Locke’s and devotee of Cicero, extended Locke’s work on the functioning of the human mind in *An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (1748). Hume maintained that human understanding is tied to experience rather than *a priori* reasoning. Empirical knowledge was the result of observation that a certain effect followed a certain cause. However, even such observations do not provide absolute certainty. Indeed, certainty was no longer obtainable in the New Science (Kimball 1986; Golden, Berquist, and Coleman 1992).

## THE NEW LOGIC AT HARVARD

Harvard students in the seventeenth century were exposed to Aristotelian, Ramean, and Cartesian logic. Cotton Mather stated “that though the Ramean Discipline be in this Colledge [sic] preferred to the Aristotelaean, yet they do not so confine themselves unto That neither, as to deprive themselves of that Libera Philosophia, which the Good Spirits of the Age have embraced, ever since the Great Lord Bacon show’d ‘em the way to The Advancement of Learning” (qtd. in Morison 1936a, 187-8). While Ramean logic may have been preferred at Harvard in the seventeenth century, most of the textbooks used were based on Aristotelian logic. However, as Morison (1936a) notes, “Cartesian logic was well established in Harvard College by the end of the century” (192). In 1686, William Brattle wrote a textbook for his Harvard students titled *Compendium Logicae* that was based on the works of Descartes and Pascal.

## THE LIBERAL-FREE IDEAL

The new epistemology of the modern age resulted in a more philosophical view of the liberal arts. As a result, the term “liberal” began to take on another meaning during the eighteenth century. In addition to the traditional *liberales* notion of freedom via leisure, “liberal” now also came to connote “free from narrow prejudice, open-minded” (qtd. in Kimball 1986, 115). The development of the scientific method, Cartesian rationality, and the focus on the individual during the Enlightenment not only called into question the received view of religion but also gave rise to what Kimball terms the “liberal-free ideal” (See Table 7 for a comparison of the *artes liberales* and “liberal-free” ideals).

**Table 7**  
**The *Artes-Liberales* Ideal vs. The Liberal-Free Ideal**

<b><i>Artes-Liberales</i> Ideal</b>	<b>Liberal-Free Ideal</b>
Adheres to a received canon of sacred texts	Asserts freedom from received standards
Commits to values/virtues of past	Emphasizes the intellect and rationality
Prescribes virtues and standards	Engages in critical skepticism
Emphasizes “good breeding” and “nobility of the mind”	Emphasizes egalitarianism
Focuses on training citizen-orators to lead society	Focuses on the individual
Asserts truth can be known	Asserts nothing can be known with certainty
Maintains education is the transmission of knowledge	Maintains the search for truth is an end in itself

Despite various efforts at reform along the lines of the liberal-free ideal, the European universities, writes Kimball, “by and large opposed freedom of thought and the new learning” (129). Similarly, he notes that effective change in American colleges did not take place until after the Civil War. However, pressure from the liberal-free ideal did force what Kimball (1986) terms the “*artes liberales* accommodation”:

As was noted concerning the 1828 Yale Reports, the accommodation of the oratorical ideal had its roots in the effort to preserve traditional liberal letters in the face of a competing ideal. That effort relied heavily upon Common Sense philosophy, faculty psychology, and mental discipline theory, which enjoyed widespread popularity in the nineteenth century. However, while saving appearances, the rationale of training the mind amounted to a first step toward the intellectual search for truth characteristic of the liberal-free ideal.

(175)



And though modern languages and science had yet to win widespread acceptance and respect, “by the Civil War these liberal-free subjects were at least teetering on the edge; and the existence of the accommodated *artes liberales* argument testifies to their proximity” (156).

### **BELLES LETTRES AND THE NEW RHETORIC**

In the late seventeenth century, another Paris innovation, *belles lettres*, would further the transition from rhetoric to criticism. Renè Rapin, coined the term “belles lettres” which appeared in the titles of two books of his collected writings published in 1684. However, while Rapin introduced the term, Bernard Lamy’s use of the term in the fifth edition of his treatise *L'Art de parler* is credited as the defining point in the transition from rhetoric to criticism:

The art of speaking is very useful and has a very extensive application. It comprises everything that in French is called Belles Lettres; in Latin and Greek philology, the Greek word means love of words. To know Belles Lettres is to know how to speak, to write, or to *judge those who write* [emphasis added]. (qtd. in Rhodes 1998, 27)

However, it was Charles Rollin, who really popularized the term in English with the translation of his four volume work *De la manière d'enseigner et d'étudier les belles lettres* in 1734. Rollin’s work was aimed at an academic audience. In it, he sums up his goal as follows: “I shall principally endeavor to form the taste of young persons. . . . The taste as it now falls under our consideration, that is, with reference to the readings of authors and composition” (qtd. in Rhodes 1998, 27). By tying *belles lettres* to taste, Rollin provided a justification for the study of literature.

Like Ramée before him, Rollin was a Professor of Eloquence at the Collège de France in Paris. The difference between Ramée's title "Professor of Philosophy and Eloquence" to Rollin's title "Professor of Eloquence and Belles Lettres" illustrates the shift of emphasis in rhetoric from philosophy to literature.

Although Lamy and Rollin helped popularize *belles lettres*, Howell (1971) writes that Fènelon, the Archbishop of Cambrai, made a far greater contribution to the new rhetoric. Indeed, Howell calls Fènelon's *Dialogues Concerning Eloquence*, published in French in 1717 and translated into English by the Scot William Stevenson in 1722, "the first modern rhetoric" and goes on to say that Fènelon "began rhetoric anew" (503).

In *Dialogues Concerning Eloquence*, Fènelon expands classical rhetoric's aim beyond persuasion to instruction and its domain beyond deliberative, forensic, and epideictic oratory to *belles lettres*. He believed that eloquence provided the true test of literary value. If a speech moved your passions, then it was the work of a true orator. However, eloquence, according to Fènelon, did not require an ornate style. In most cases, he argued, a simple style was preferred.

The influence of the New Rhetoric would continue to grow throughout the eighteenth century, fomented by the works of Adam Smith, George Campbell, Joseph Priestley, Hugh Blair, John Witherspoon and others. Howell (1971) identifies six important distinctions between the New Rhetoric and the Old:

- 1) The New Rhetoric expanded rhetoric's bounds beyond forensic, deliberative, and epideictic speech to include learned and popular discourse, including all types of *belles lettres*.

- 2) The New Rhetoric shifted away from artistic proofs and topics of invention and instead embraced scientific and scholarly proof.
- 3) The New Rhetoric emphasized induction rather than the traditional enthymematic proofs such as the syllogism.
- 4) The New Rhetoric applied more rigorous scientific standards to probabilities to give its arguments greater credibility.
- 5) The New Rhetoric abandoned the elaborate six-part form of a Ciceronian argument for simpler structures.
- 6) The New Rhetoric preferred the plain and middle styles of Locke and the Royal Society to the ornate style with its emphasis on tropes and figures.<sup>7</sup>

In addition, there was one other important way in which the New Rhetoric differed from the Old. Unlike the Old Rhetoric, which had emphasized speech, the New Rhetoric focused more on written works. Thus, while the modern epistemology of the New Logic helped pave the way for the modern university, the grammocentric focus of the New Rhetoric together with the expansion of its domain to include *belles lettres* would eventually open the curriculum to both criticism and the literature of the modern languages.

#### **CHANGING THE RULES**

Ramist reform and the epistemological revolution would change the rules for higher education. By restructuring the classical curriculum, Ramée shifted the focus of rhetoric from logic to eloquence and, eventually, criticism. By changing the emphasis of education from moral improvement to skill development, he secularized higher education. By re-focusing the curriculum to meet the needs of the French middle class,

he adopted the utility ideal and promoted upward mobility. And finally, by using modern poetry to illustrate principles of eloquence, he promoted the use of the vernacular (despite the fact he translated his works into Latin).

The epistemological revolution fundamentally altered the way knowledge was understood. The shift from deduction to induction reflected a change from the static view of received knowledge to the dynamic view of creating new knowledge. Logic, which had formerly been used interchangeably with philosophy, was now linked instead to science, while philosophy was shifted from enquiry to a critical, self-reflexive role. Rhetoric, no longer associated with logic, expanded its domain to popular discourse, such as *belles lettres*. And the immediate success of Locke's *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* and its adoption into the curriculum validated English as a language for learned communication.

Eventually, the forces underlying Ramist reform and the epistemological revolution would result in a shift away from the *artes-liberales* ideal of the classical college to the liberal-free ideal of the modern university. By changing the environment of higher education, Ramist reform and the epistemological revolution paved the way for English studies.

## CHAPTER FIVE

# THE RISE OF ENGLISH

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*Our words must not only be English and agreeable to the custom of the country, but likewise to the custom of some particular part of the nation. This part undoubtedly informed of the men of rank and breeding. The easiness of those persons' behavior is so agreeable and taking that whatever is connected with it pleases us.*

—Adam Smith

*The Scots, Dissenters, and Americans studied proper English for the same reason that the English studied Latin: the prestige language was that which stood one step removed from common life, and thus one step above the common people.*

—Thomas Miller

*The shift of grammatical studies from the classics to English involved a shift from a method of **teaching** a foreign language to one of **correcting** a native one.*

—Arthur N. Applebee

### A FALSE START

Even with the rise of New Rhetoric, Latin and, to a lesser extent, Greek remained the official languages of instruction and the classical curriculum still reigned supreme. However, for a time in the mid-seventeenth-century it looked as if English studies might infiltrate the curriculum. A chair of Anglo-Saxon was established at Cambridge in 1640 (two years before Harvard opened) through the efforts of Archbishop Ussher, and Sir Henry Spelman and his son John Spelman. But with the deaths of the Spelmans in 1641 and 1643, respectively, together with the death of Abraham Wheloc, the only holder of the chair, in 1653, it would be until 1878 before another professor of Anglo-Saxon

appeared at Cambridge. It would be even longer—until 1911—before Cambridge had a professor of English literature. As Parker notes, it is interesting to speculate how different the study of English might be today had the experiment at Cambridge succeeded. Instead, English studies would take bloom outside England's university system in the dissenting academies and Scottish universities.

### **THE DISSENTERS AND THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH**

The regular teaching of English at the college level began in England as an indirect result of the Act of Uniformity of 1662. With the Restoration of the Stuart monarchy after the failed republican experiment of the Commonwealth, the Anglican Church was once again recognized as the state religion. As part of the Act of Uniformity, university teachers and students were required to vow loyalty to Anglicanism. The Protestant faculty who refused were expelled from the university and forbidden from opening their own schools. Nevertheless, these Dissenters, as they were called, began teaching out of their homes in order to educate their Protestant children. Eventually, with the passing of the Acts of Toleration in 1689, a number of schools were established as dissenting academies (Palmer 1965).

Unlike the English universities, the dissenting academies soon expanded beyond the traditional classical curriculum. As Miller (1997) notes, the Dissenters' middle class background together with the restrictions upon their participation in English society—dissenters could not serve in the military or government—fostered a more utilitarian approach to education. Though one of the purposes of the dissenting academies was to train clergy, most of the academies' students would need to prepare for more worldly careers (unlike their upper class university counterparts). Thus, classical studies soon

gave way to more pragmatic subjects, including modern languages, English composition and *belles lettres* (Palmer 1965).

In creating their own curriculum, the Dissenters looked to Locke and Calvin rather than Aristotle and Cicero. They taught the new science, history, politics, and English, utilizing a comparative method of instruction in which opposing views were aired and discussed. Not surprisingly for a group whose views were repressed, they advocated free inquiry, believing it would advance political reform as well as morality (Miller 1997). Thus, the dissenting academies combined the free inquiry approach of the liberal-free ideal with a pragmatic, utilitarian approach to higher education.

Miller (1990a) writes that the Dissenters were “cultural provincials” (51) and that they studied and taught English because they were not accepted as English. To them, English represented the language of political power and cultural prestige, just as Latin did for the English aristocrats. In any case, the Dissenters began to both lecture in English and teach English studies courses in literature, composition, and rhetoric. Unlike the upper class students of the classical English universities who sought to confirm their respectable place in society, the middle class students of the dissenting academies sought upward mobility. “The Dissenters taught English,” writes Miller (1990a), “out of a practical utilitarian desire to get ahead in business and regain their rights as English citizens” (65). A proper English dialect and a learned understanding of English culture were viewed as critical to their success. For the Dissenters, “correct” English meant not only the right dialect but also a proper understanding of English culture.

The history of the dissenting academies can be divided into three distinct generations. Charles Morton (1627-1698) was arguably the most significant of the first

generation of dissenting educators. He ran a large academy outside of London from 1673-1686. Unlike the traditional university instructor, Morton lectured entirely in English. His expanded curriculum included English composition, experimental science, civil and ecclesiastical history, constitutional law, geography, modern languages, and political philosophy. One of his students was Daniel Defoe, who studied under Morton from 1676-1681. According to Defoe, Morton's students had weekly declamations in English and regularly wrote English compositions. Morton took an oratorical approach to English and had students role-play as ambassadors and politicians. "In a word," writes Defoe, "his pupils came out of his hands finish'd orators, fitted to speak in the highest presence, to the great assemblies, and even in Parliaments, Courts of Justice, or any where" (qtd. in Miller 1997, 90). Clearly, the ideal of the *bonus orator* persisted in Morton's academy, albeit with the focus on English rather than Latin and with an added emphasis on writing in addition to speech.

Morton's academy not only prepared students for fields other than the clergy but also drew its faculty from specialized interests. Samuel Wesley, the founder of Methodism and another of Morton's students, noted that at Morton's academy there was "a Distinction of the Faculties, and Employments of every One, whether Law, Divinity, Phisick, or what Else" (qtd. in Miller 1997, 90). Wesley also praised the academy's science laboratory and equipment. According to Girdler, Morton, who contributed to the Royal Society, wrote a science text that was "at least fifty years ahead" of what was being taught in the English universities (qtd. in Miller 1997, 90).

Eventually, Morton was arrested for violating the Uniform Act of 1662. In order to avoid prosecution, he fled to America. Before leaving, however, he wrote a defense



entitled "Vindication drawn up when charged with breaking the Stamford Oath." Since 1334 graduating students at Cambridge and Oxford were required to take the Stamford Oath, swearing they would not break the university's monopoly on higher education by lecturing in public. In his defense, Morton argued that learning should not be restricted but rather "Knowledge increas'd and not only confin'd to the Clergy or Learned Professions, but extended or diffus'd as much as might be, to the People in general" (qtd. in Miller 1997, 91).

Morton also represents an important tie between the dissenters and American education. After his arrival in America, Morton was appointed vice president at Harvard. At Harvard he introduced experimental studies of natural philosophy and wrote a number of textbooks on moral philosophy and logic (Morrison 1936b).

The restrictions on dissenting academies were eased in 1689 as a reward for the Dissenters' support of Williams's succession to throne. As a result, the second generation of dissenting educators was able to run their academies in the open. The best known educator of this second generation was Phillip Doddridge (1702-1751). Doddridge was himself a product of a Dissenting academy, having studied under John Jennings. In his own academy, Doddridge focused on the needs of the middle class. Like Morton, he taught in English. Miller notes that it was Doddridge's broad influence that established English as the language of instruction in dissenting academies. Doddridge encouraged students to become "masters of our own language" (qtd. in Miller 1997, 97).

Doddridge was a close friend of Isaac Watts, whose poor health resulted in his writing textbooks and popular religious literature rather than opening his own academy.

Watts' textbooks on logic popularized Locke's epistemology. Of Watts' *Logic or the Right Use of Reason* (1724), Howell wrote that "it is fair to say that in the English-speaking world more eighteenth-century students and serious general readers learned their lessons in logic from Isaac Watts than from any other source" (Howell 1971, 342). Indeed, Crowley (1990) notes that it remained an influential text in America through the middle of the nineteenth century. Similarly, Watts' *Improvement of the Mind: or a Supplement to the Art of Logic* (1741) was one of the best-known textbooks of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. His follow-up book *The Improvement of the Mind, the Second Part with A Discourse on Education* (1751) provided teachers with pointers on leading class discussions and addressed the writing process.

Both Watts and Doddridge took a pragmatic approach to education. They believed students would develop a stronger faith by using reason to question received beliefs. Miller (1997) credits Watts's *Improvement of the Mind* as "one of the most pedagogically effective textbooks in the early history of the teaching of English" (92). With this and other works, Watts sought and succeeded in expanding literacy beyond the upper class. Similarly, Doddridge's *Course of Lectures on the Principal Subjects in Pneumatology, Ethics, and Divinity* (published posthumously in 1763) was developed to serve the needs an emerging middle class. In his lectures, Doddridge drew upon various figures from the Enlightenment, presenting a Lockean epistemology along with the new Common Sense philosophy introduced by the Scots. Together, Doddridge and Watts helped to expand literacy, promoted free inquiry and the comparative method of study, and established English as both the language of instruction and a subject to be studied.

The most noted figure from the third generation of Dissenters, Joseph Priestley, had hoped to study at Doddridge's academy. However, it closed with Doddridge's death in 1752. Instead, Priestley studied under Caleb Ashworth, a student of Doddridge's from 1752-55. Like Watts and Doddridge, Priestley maintained close ties to Scottish moral philosophers and was awarded a Scottish doctorate. Priestley went on to teach at the Warrington academy as an instructor of languages and belles lettres from 1762-1767. By the end of its thirty-year existence, the Warrington academy had become the most famous of all dissenting academies. Unlike Cambridge or Oxford, only 22% of its students entered the clergy. Almost twice as many, 40%, pursued business as a career, and both law and medicine had followings of nearly 10% each (Miller 1997).

It isn't surprising then, that Priestley held a utilitarian view of education. Education, he argued, should prepare students for "the business of life," and so, his curriculum emphasized science, composition, history, and other practical subjects. In regards to his history courses, he wrote, "COMMERCE has by no means been overlooked" (qtd. in Miller 1997, 102). Doddridge incorporated the free market principles of Adam Smith into his courses. And, like Smith, he believed education should be subject to supply and demand. According to Miller, Priestley also promoted specialized disciplinary knowledge supported by business interests and, like Smith, argued that the university should be integrated into the economy.<sup>1</sup>

Using the association philosophy of John Locke and David Hartley to explain rhetorical effects, Priestley employed a psychological approach to rhetoric (Moran 1994). In 1777, Priestley published his reworked lecture notes as *A Course of Lectures on Oratory and Criticism*. Rejecting Scottish common sense philosophy, Priestley

advocated a rhetoric based on experience rather than innate mental powers. In so doing, Priestley advocated the “new rhetoric,” preferring inductive reasoning to deductive, a plain style to the elaborate form associated with Cicero, and rejecting the commonplace topics of invention.

In addition to being a practicing rhetorician active in the political and religious debates of the day, Priestley was a scientist, elected as a fellow of the Royal Society and winner of the Society’s prestigious Copley Medal. Indeed, today Priestley is best known for his work as a scientist in isolating oxygen. Priestley met Benjamin Franklin in London in 1766 and became fascinated with natural philosophy (experimental science) (Moran 1994). Shortly thereafter, he wrote *The History and Present State of Electricity* (1767). In it and other scientific works of his, Priestley originated such modern staples of the genre as a review of literature, a description of experimental procedures, and a call for further research (Miller 1997). Perhaps his most lasting contribution to English studies was in grammar. Arguing against luminaries such as Addison, Pope, and Swift—who warned that the English language was decaying due to improper usage—Priestley stated that standard usage should be based on the actual usage of educated people.

Like Morton, Doddridge, and Watts before him, Priestley advocated free inquiry, writing that “should free inquiry lead to the destruction of Christianity itself, it should not [. . .] be discontinued; for we can only wish for the prevalence of Christianity on the supposition of its being true” (qtd. in Miller 1997, 104). In the classroom, he used the comparative method. Students would debate various issues in class, then were assigned to research and defend their position in “orations, theses, or dissertations” (qtd. in Miller 1997, 101).

Although, he used literature as examples to demonstrate the psychological effects of discourse, Priestley had a Calvinist suspicion of the literature's potential licentious effect on the individual. Instead, he argued that education should be based on the critical study of history. Literature and philology, he wrote, are "no more than the amusements of childhood" compared to scientific approach and other "branches of knowledge" advocated by Bacon and others (qtd. in Miller, 102).

The dissenting academies foreshadowed many of the changes that were to come in the modern American university and/or English studies, including the following:

- 1) Adopting English as the language of instruction
- 2) Teaching the correct English dialect and proper English culture
- 3) Expanding the student body beyond the upper class
- 4) Advocating a more utilitarian approach to learning
- 5) Introducing the New Rhetoric
- 6) Putting greater emphasis on writing
- 7) Advocating free inquiry and the new logic

### **THE SCOTS**

While college level instruction in English originated in the dissenting academies, English studies was born in Scotland. And once again, British politics played a key role. In this case, it was the 1707 Union of Parliaments which united Scotland and England into "one United Kingdom by the name of Great Britain" that proved the catalyst for reform.

At the time of the Union, Scotland had four universities. Three—St. Andrews, Glasgow, and Aberdeen—had been founded in the fifteenth-century by the Catholic

church. The fourth—Edinburgh—was founded in 1583 by the town council and had no religious affiliation. After the Revolution of 1688, control over Scottish universities and schools shifted from the church to the state. Thus, unlike English university students, Scottish students did not have to swear allegiance to a state religion in order to be admitted. Scottish students also differed from their English counterparts in that they were typically younger, more diverse, and less well off (Homer 1993; Miller 1997).

### **Scottish University Reforms**

For most of the seventeenth-century, the Scottish universities adhered to the classical curriculum, emphasizing ancient languages, Greek and Roman authorities, and the old, syllogistic approach to logic. But beginning in the 1690s, the universities began incorporating “‘experimental’ trends in natural and moral philosophy, and by 1710 the teaching of natural philosophy had become ‘fundamentally Newtonian’” (Miller 1997, 158).

However, the signal event in the reformation of the Scottish curriculum was the 1707 Union of Parliaments. While unification diminished Scottish political independence, Scottish religious and educational autonomy was maintained. This was achieved, in part, because the leaders of the Moderate Party of the Scottish Church lent their support to the Union. Both the church and the university were paths to upward mobility in Scotland, and the Moderate Party took advantage of both.

After the Union, Edinburgh University’s Principal William Carstares,<sup>2</sup> the most influential Scottish educator of the time, introduced a number of reforms. One of the most significant was the establishment of specialized professorships. Previously, Scottish students were assigned a single regent who instructed them in all courses throughout the

length of their program. Carstares changed this by establishing professorships in “Logic and Metaphisick,” “Ethics and Natural Philosophy,” and “Pnewmaticks and Morall Philosophy.” As Carstares’ reforms were adopted and courses in contemporary ethics and politics gained ground, classical languages suffered a corresponding loss in their influence. Latin and Greek, which previously had been integrated across the curriculum, became standalone courses. These institutional changes marked the beginning of the decline of the classical curriculum (Miller 1997).

### **The Birth of English Studies**

The birthplace of English studies, writes Applebee (1974), was the University of Edinburgh and its parent was logic. In 1730 John Stevenson, Professor of Logic and Metaphysics, became the first university professor to lecture on English literature, composition, and rhetoric. Stevenson devoted the first hour of his two hour logic course to rhetoric, drawing upon examples from modern English and French writers as well as the ancient authorities to illustrate various principles of composition. Stevenson, like Adam Smith and Hugh Blair, believed the principles of rhetoric were universal and could be applied to modern works in modern languages as well as classical works in Greek and Latin. According to a former student, Stevenson endeavored “by prelections on the most esteemed classics, ancient and modern, to instill into the mind of his pupils, a relish for works of taste, and a love of elegant composition” (qtd. in Bevilacqua 1965, 43).

Stevenson took a belletristic approach to rhetoric. His personal copies of both Lamy (the fifth edition) and Rollin are still kept at the Edinburgh University library (Rhodes 1998). While his lectures do not survive, thirty-seven of his students’ essays do. Written on topics such as “Taste” and “Rules of Conversation,” they exhibit a definite

belletristic bent. For example, the essay on “Taste” argues that it is a natural faculty founded on “plain common Sense” that is in “Sympathy” with the natural order (Miller 1997).

Stevenson brings together a number of strands that would contribute to the rise of English studies. In his lectures on logic, he substituted Locke and Heinecke for Aristotle and Ramus. The success of this substitution was such that a later principal of Edinburgh would remark that it was difficult to find a lecture on Aristotle’s logic at the university after 1730 (Howell 1971). While Stevenson’s emphasis on rhetoric over logic and his introduction of Locke and *belles lettres* into the university curriculum were critical to the development of English studies, his most important legacy may have been his students. Both Hugh Blair and John Witherspoon, the most influential teachers of English in eighteenth century Britain and America, respectively, praised Stevenson as their most influential teacher (Miller 1997).

### **The Adoption of “Proper” English**

While the advent of specialized professors marked the beginning of the end for the classical curriculum, it was the adoption of English as the language of instruction that would ultimately be listed as the cause of death. Like the dissenters, the Scots recognized the importance of being able to speak “proper” English. While both the dissenters and the Scots spoke English as their native language, they realized that they needed to master the London standard dialect in order to optimize their prospects in the British Empire. As Miller (1997) observes, the Scots studied English “for the same reason that the English studied Latin and the Latins studied Greek: it was the language with prestige and power”



(145). At the same time, much of post-Union Scottish education focused on eliminating Scottish “rusticisms” (Horner 1993, 24).

The defeat of the Jacobite rebellion of 1715 sparked further reform and a greater emphasis on English as professors with Jacobite sympathies were replaced by a new generation of professors who supported the Union and sought to integrate Scotland into the British Empire. Notable among this new generation were two professors of moral philosophy—George Turnbull and Francis Hutcheson. Both were among the first university professors to lecture in English—Turnbull at Marischal College in Aberdeen, from 1721 to 1727; and Hutcheson at the University of Glasgow from 1729 to 1746 (Miller 1997).

Scots also established literary societies to promote proper English. One of the most famous was the Select Society (1754-64). Among its members were a number of noted Scottish literati including David Hume, Adam Smith, Hugh Robertson, Hugh Blair, Adam Ferguson, James Boswell, and Henry Home. The Society sponsored two four-week series of public lectures by Thomas Sheridan on English elocution in 1761. The lectures, which concentrated on “those points with regard to which Scotsmen are most ignorant, and the dialect of this country most imperfect” (qtd. in Miller 1997, 13) proved extremely popular. Ironically, Susan Jarratt (1998) writes that the Select Society would eventually fail due to a visit from another Englishman, Charles Townsend, who ridiculed the Scottish accent after watching a debate. After Townsend’s visit and harsh remarks, observes Jarratt, the national inferiority complex undermined subscriptions and doomed the society.

Scots, even educated Scots, frequently viewed London English as a foreign language and were fearful of making mistakes. In a letter in 1778, Beattie described this fear as follows:

We who live in Scotland are obliged to study English from books, like a dead language. . . . We are slaves to the language we write, and are continually afraid of committing gross blunders; and when an easy, familiar, idiomatical phrase occurs, dare not adopt it, if we recollect no authority for fear of Scotticisms. In a word, we handle English, as a person who cannot fence handles a sword; continually afraid of hurting ourselves with it, or letting it fall, or making some awkward motion that shall betray our ignorance. (qtd. in Miller 1997, 155)

A few years later, Beattie created a dictionary, *Scotticisms* (1787), for the sole purpose of identifying Scottish idioms that should not be used.

Henry Home who would become Lord Kames in 1752 is perhaps the man most responsible for promoting both “proper English” and, indirectly, English literature. Home, a lawyer and later a judge, realized the importance of “proper” English in securing Scotland’s place in the empire. In particular, he was concerned with the effectiveness of Scottish lawyers defending Scottish interests in English courts. Toward that end, he wanted to develop a pre-law program of study that would include *belles lettres* and criticism, mathematics, physics, and natural history (Court 2001).

In 1748 Home recruited Adam Smith to deliver a series of public lectures in English on rhetoric and *belles lettres* in Edinburgh, probably under the auspices of the Philosophical Society. It is interesting to note that one of the purported reasons for

Smith's selection was that "his pronunciation and his style were much superior" to Scots who had not had the benefit of studying at Oxford (qtd. in Miller 1997, 169). Stevenson, of course, was already lecturing on rhetoric and *belles lettres* at the University of Edinburgh. However, his lectures weren't available to the general public and, more importantly, were delivered in Latin (Howell 1971).

Smith delivered his lectures in the late fall and winter of 1748-49 and they were such a great success that he repeated them in 1749-50, and again in 1750-51. In the lectures, Smith preached linguistic assimilation, advocating "proper" English: "Our words must not only be English and agreeable to the custom of the country, but likewise to the custom of some particular part of the nation. This part undoubtedly informed of the men of rank and breeding. The easiness of those persons' behavior is so agreeable and taking to us that whatever is connected with it pleases us" (Smith 1762, 2).<sup>3</sup> For Smith and Home, competency in "proper" English was something to be learned, a competency required for success in the British Empire. As Miller (1997) observes:

The academies founded by dissenters took a practical interest in English as the language of politics and business, while the Scots and Irish taught English as a means to cultural assimilation. However, whether the first professors and students of English were set apart by political restrictions or cultural differences, they shared a dialectical identity as both Britons and dissenters, Irish or Scots, and they studied English because they were not accepted as English. (18)

Thus, like the dissenters before them and the Americans after them, the Scots took a correctness approach to the study of the English language.

### **Moral Science and Common Sense Philosophy**

In the classical curriculum, moral philosophy included the study of pneumatology—"the science" of "spirits or spiritual beings," including "the doctrine of God as known by natural reason, of angels and demons, and of the human soul" (qtd. in Miller 1997, 26). In the dissenting academies and the Scottish universities, pneumatology provided the entry point for the new science to enter the curriculum. Perhaps the best example of this occurred at Marischal College in Aberdeen where the entire curriculum was reorganized around the inductive logic of science.

George Turnbull, Professor of Moral Philosophy at Marischal from 1721 to 1727, championed a "Newtonian" approach to moral philosophy. Turnbull began his course on moral philosophy with pneumatology. Like Hutcheson and other Scottish moral philosophers, Turnbull believed that human nature and history, like the physical world, could be explained by natural laws (Miller 1997). In his dedication to *Principles of Moral Philosophy* (1740), Turnbull wrote that he hoped "to account for MORAL, as the great Newton has taught us to explain NATURAL Appearances" (qtd. in Miller 1997, 209). The new scientific approach to moral philosophy sought to explain human nature through observation and experience rather than cosmology. Turnbull's impact at Marischal is perhaps best exemplified by the fact that his students and successors, among them Thomas Reid, David Fordyce, Alexander Gerard, and James Beattie, used the term moral science rather than moral philosophy.

Turnbull's most important contribution to moral philosophy was his emphasis on common sense. Turnbull believed people were guided by a natural common sense to promote the overall good of humanity. The concept of *sensus communis* can be traced

back to Cicero. Traditionally, the concept referred to common beliefs shared within a society. However, Turnbull and other Scottish common sense philosophers identified common sense as a faculty of the mind. In so doing, they followed the lead of Lord Shaftesbury, who, between 1707 and 1712, published a series of monographs and articles that re-introduced the term:

Some moral and philosophical truths there are withal so evident in themselves, that it would be easier to imagine half mankind to have run mad, and joined precisely in one and the same species of folly, than to admit any thing as truth which should be advanced against such *natural knowledge, fundamental reason, and common sense*. (qtd. in Horner 1993, 28)

There were two major schools of moral philosophy in eighteenth century Britain. The first, following Thomas Hobbes, argued that human behavior was motivated by self-interest. The second, following Lord Shaftesbury took a more optimistic view of human nature, arguing that human behavior was motivated by feelings of compassion and selflessness. This innate moral sense, Shaftesbury believed, was linked to the sense of beauty (Court 2001).

Francis Hutcheson, who most scholars identify as the founder of the Scottish school of common sense philosophy, promoted Shaftesbury's view in his book *An Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue; in Two Treatises. In Which the Principles of the late Earl of Shaftesbury are explain'd and defended, against the Author of the Fable of the Bees: And the Ideas of Moral Good and Evil are establish'd according to the Sentiments of the ancient Moralists, With an Attempt to introduce a Mathematical Calculation in Subjects of Morality* (1725). According to Ian Ross (1995),

it was the first book published in Britain specifically concerned with aesthetics.

Hutcheson believed humans had an innate sense of beauty and a corresponding sense of morality. A Presbyterian minister, Hutcheson linked aesthetics to morals. He saw God as the “Author of Nature” who “has made Virtue a lovely Form, to excite our pursuit of it” (qtd. in Ross 1995, 50-1).

Like Shaftesbury, Hutcheson believed that an innate moral sense arbitrated between self-interest and the public good. In *Inquiry*, Hutcheson defined the “best” action as that “which accomplishes the *greatest* happiness for the *greatest Numbers*,” (qtd. in Court 2001, 6) illustrating his concern for public over individual welfare. Like his student Adam Smith, Hutcheson personified the moral sense as a disinterested spectator who mediates between public and individual welfare based on his “sympathetick” sense of “fellow-feeling” for others (qtd. in Miller 1997, 188).

While Shaftesbury argued that moral decisions should be made from disinterested motives, Hutcheson added that they should also be disinterested judgments (Raphael 1975). The moral sense, according to Hutcheson, resulted from a disinterested feeling of approval, or sympathy, when observing an action of benevolence. He compared it to the aesthetic pleasure received when viewing a beautiful object. However, it is not the moral agent’s approval that makes an act virtuous or an object beautiful, but rather that of a disinterested spectator. Later, David Hume would write that “The hypothesis which we embrace . . . defines virtue to be whatever mental action or quality gives to a spectator the pleasing sentiment of approbation; and vice the contrary” (qtd. in Raphael 1975, 87). Eventually, Adam Smith would further refine the concept of the impartial spectator to include the judgments of conscience made by a moral agent regarding his own actions.

As Miller (1997) observes, while the notion of a disinterested spectator is a far cry from classical rhetoric's *bonus orator*, it aptly reflects the objective stance of a social scientist or literary critic.

Like Hutcheson and the common sense philosophers who followed him, Hume believed both the moral sense and aesthetic taste could be developed:

When objects of any kind are first presented to the eye or imagination, the sentiment, which attends them, is obscure and confused; and the mind is, in a great measure, incapable of pronouncing concerning their merits or defects. The taste cannot perceive the several excellences of the performance; much less distinguish the particular character of each excellency, and ascertain its quality and degree. . . .

But allow him to acquire experience in those objects, his feeling becomes more exact and nice: He not only perceives the beauties and defects of each part, but marks the distinguishing species of each quality, and assigns it suitable praise or blame. (qtd. in Harrington 1998, 26)

A disciple of Locke's, Hume published the most extensive work yet on empiricism *A Treatise on Human Nature* in 1739. In his Introduction to *Treatise*, Hume called upon his readers to study human nature scientifically: "There is no question of importance, whose decision is not compriz'd in the science of man; and there is none, which can be decided with any certainty, before we become acquainted with that science" (4). All learning, argued Hume, should be grounded in the science of human nature:

Here then is the only expedient, from which we can hope for success in our philosophical researches, to leave the tedious lingering [sic] method, which we have hitherto followed, and instead of taking now and then a castle or village on the frontier, to march up directly to the capital or center of these sciences, to human nature itself; which being once masters of, we may every where else hope for an easy victory. (4)

While Hume's call for a scientific approach to the study of human nature was embraced by Scottish moral philosophers, his skepticism was viewed as a threat to religious beliefs. Hume's criticisms of cause and effect reasoning, his questioning of the reliability of sensory perception, his comments on the limitations of knowledge, subjectivity of morality, and his attack on miracles challenged religious leaders' (and most of the Scottish literati were religious leaders) belief in a Divinely-ordered universe (Miller 1997).

In order to combat Hume's skepticism, Thomas Reid, James Oswald, James Beattie, Dugald Stewart and other Scottish philosophers redefined the moral sense as a common sense, an innate mental faculty common to all. By so doing, they argued that our natural powers enable us to directly and accurately perceive external reality. Thus, they rejected the Lockean and Humean notion that what we perceive are representations, or ideas, of external reality. Instead, the common sense philosophers argued that a set of incontrovertible beliefs, i.e., common sense, is implanted in the human mind by God. Similarly, they stated that the moral sense is also a universal faculty. Common sense, thus, became the antidote to Hobbesian egoism as well as rationalism and skepticism.



Works such as Reid's *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man* (1785) and *Essays on the Active Powers of Man* (1788); James Oswald's *Appeal to Common Sense in Behalf of Religion* volumes one and two (1762-66); James Beattie's *Essay on the Nature and Immutability of Truth* (1770); and Dugald Stewart's *Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind* (1792) and *The Active and Moral Powers* (1828) enabled the common sense school to dominate philosophy through the mid-nineteenth century.

### **From Rhetoric to Criticism**

Adam Smith's lectures on rhetoric and *belles lettres* marked, writes Applebee (1974), "the first time literary criticism had been dealt with in a separate course of lectures" (8). The lectures proved both a financial success—earning him £100 a year—and professional one—securing him a position as Professor of Logic (the same title as Stevenson) at the University of Glasgow (Bevilacqua 1965). His first series of lectures had an audience of approximately 100 people, including Lord Kames, a number of students studying for the bar, and a number of students studying for the pulpit, among them Hugh Blair. The lectures proved so popular that Smith repeated them once or twice over the next two years (Howell 1971).

For Smith (and Lord Kames), the lectures represented an opportunity for "nation-building," by preparing the emerging Scottish professional class to become effective British citizens. In short, these were Scottish self-improvement lectures designed to teach English culture and taste while modeling the proper English dialect. Assimilation was the goal. "The study of English literature," writes Court (1992), "could prove particularly fruitful because it was a way to teach conduct, not as Renaissance humanists before him had employed it, as a measure of "polite learning," designed for the sons of

the aristocracy, but as a way to transcend class-based distinctions [such as the wrong dialect and ignorance of English culture and taste ]and to promote English citizenship” (20).

Smith recognized that the emerging free market would displace the old, aristocratic order. While the free market provided a great opportunity for Scotland, Smith realized that one of the dangers of *laissez-faire* capitalism was an unrestrained self-interest. The study of English literature, Smith believed, would not only help Scots construct the British identity necessary for success but also enable them to cultivate the moral sense necessary to mediate between self-interest and sympathy (Court 1992).

Unfortunately, we have no record of Smith’s Edinburgh lectures. Prior to his death, he gave orders for all but a few of his papers he thought ready for publication to be destroyed, among them his lectures on rhetoric. However, in 1958, John M. Lothian discovered a notebook containing a student’s transcript of Adam Smith’s 1762-3 lectures on rhetoric and *belles lettres* at the University of Glasgow. While there are obvious limitations with using a student’s transcript of Smith’s lectures on the same topic delivered fourteen years later, scholars assume they give a fair representation of Smith’s views. John Millar, who attended Smith’s original lectures in Edinburgh and heard them again as a student at Glasgow, noted that rhetoric took up a considerable portion of Smith’s course on logic:

In the Professorship of Logic, to which Mr. Smith was appointed on his first introduction into this University, he soon saw the necessity of departing widely from the plan that had been followed by his predecessors, and of directing the attention of his pupils to studies of a more interesting and useful

nature than the logic and metaphysics of the schools. Accordingly, after exhibiting so much of the ancient logic as was requisite to gratify curiosity with respect to an artificial method of reasoning, which had once occupied the universal attention of the learned, he dedicated all of the rest of his time to the delivery of a system of rhetoric and belles lettres. (qtd. in Howell 1971, 537)

Smith delivered thirty lectures on rhetoric and belles lettres during his 1762-3 course at Glasgow. The student transcript discovered by Lothian covers all but the first lecture. Howell (1971) argues that Smith's lectures on rhetoric and belles lettres differed in two significant ways from the French approach of writers such as Rapin and Rollin. One, he "made rhetoric the general theory of all branches of literature—the historical, the poetical, the didactic or scientific, and the oratorical" (547). And two, Smith picked and chose from various ancient rhetorics in constructing a new rhetoric for modern times.

Howell divides the lectures into two groups—ten lectures devoted to communication and nineteen to forms of discourse. In the ten lectures on communication, Smith makes two key points. One, he states that the overall focus of rhetoric is communication, not persuasion. And two, he advocates the plain style as the preferred style for modern rhetoric in a scientific age (Howell 1975). Both of these points are noted in Smith's eleventh lecture:

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 style consists in express[ing] in the most concise, proper, and precise manner the thought of the author, and that in the manner which best

conveys the sentiment, passion, or affection with which it affects—or he pretends it does affect—him, and which he designs to communicate to the reader. (qtd. in Howell 1975, 23)

In the remaining nineteen lectures, Smith discussed history, poetry, didactic (scientific) writing, and oratory. Here Smith argues for abandoning the Ciceronian six-part form of oration in favor of a proposition/proof format and suggested turning away from artistic proofs and topics of invention in favor of nonartistic arguments and direct proofs (Howell 1971).

The popularity of the Smith's Edinburgh lectures was such that when Smith left to become Professor of Logic at Glasgow in 1751, Lord Kames recruited Robert Watson to continue them upon Smith's departure. Little mention is usually made of Watson's role in the formation of English studies; however, as Rhodes points out, Watson was the first to explicitly replace rhetoric with criticism in the university curriculum. Unlike Smith's lectures, three manuscripts of Watson's St. Andrews lectures survive. In his first lecture, Watson declares his belief that rhetoric and criticism are interchangeable:

By the Rules of Rhetorick are meant Nothing else, but Observations concerning the Particulars which render Discourse excellent & usefull.

It is not proposed to deliver them in the Form of Rules, but in the form of general Criticisms illustrated by Examples from Authors. To what follows then you may give the name of Rhetorick, or Criticism as you please; if they deserve one they will deserve the other also. (qtd. in Rhodes 1998, 29)

Lord Kames later solidified the term “criticism” with the publication of his extremely successful *Elements of Criticism* in 1762.

In 1756 Watson left to assume the Chair of Logic, Rhetoric, and Metaphysics at St. Andrews. In 1759 Lord Kames recruited Hugh Blair to continue the lectures. Blair began his lectures on Dec 11, 1759, and unlike Smith’s and Watson’s lectures, his were delivered at the University of Edinburgh. In June of 1760, Blair was appointed Professor of Rhetoric; and the lectures became part of the university curriculum. Two years later, in June of 1762, Blair became Regius Professor of Rhetoric and Belles Lettres. The belles lettres portion of his title was suggested by Blair himself, noting that it gave the title “a more modern air” (qtd. in Rhodes 1998, 28). Ironically, Blair’s appointment was protested (to no avail) by John Stevenson, who felt his former student’s lectures encroached upon subject matter Stevenson was already covering in his classes on logic (Howell 1971). According to Miller (1997), though other professors of logic and moral philosophy were teaching rhetoric, composition, and criticism, Blair was the first university professor formally appointed to teach English.

In 1783, shortly after retiring as Regius Professor, Blair published forty-seven of his lectures in a two volume work entitled *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* for the impressive sum of fifteen hundred pounds. Eventually published in over 100 editions, versions, and abridgments in Britain and the U.S., *Lectures* was the most popular and influential rhetoric of its time (Abbott 1998; Miller 1997). Its influence spread quickly to the U.S.; Yale adopted it into its curriculum in 1785, Harvard in 1788, and Dartmouth as late as 1822 (Applebee 1974).

The popularity and influence of Blair's *Lectures* was due to a combination of his popularity, his reputation and ability as a synthesizer, and the pedagogic usefulness of *Lectures*. Blair was a famous preacher and a leader of the Moderate Party of the Presbyterian Church. He published five volumes of his sermons, which became a popular and financial success in both Britain and the U.S., earning him a pension from the king (Miller 1997). He published an edition of Shakespeare as well as a famous forty-four-volume edition of *The British Poets*, the first uniform edition ever published in Britain (Court 1992). And finally, he was a celebrity throughout Europe for his defense of the purported Celtic poet in the Ossian controversy (Abbott 1998).

However, it wasn't solely Blair's reputation that accounted for the success of *Lectures*. Linda Ferreira-Buckley (1998a) writes that although Blair's rhetoric wasn't original, he did a great job in synthesizing classical conceptions of rhetoric with new doctrines. *Lectures* was also "pedagogically attractive," providing a comprehensive view of oral and written discourse along with the new critical method for examining *belles lettres* (Abbott 1998, 74-5). As Howell (1971) observed, the resulting popularity of Blair's *Lectures*

did more than anything else to fix the association between rhetoric and belles lettres and to give both of these terms a reference to all the forms of discourse—orations, historical works, philosophical treatises and dialogues, epistles, fiction, pastoral poems, lyric poems, didactic poems, biblical writings, epic poems, tragedies, and comedies. (535)

In preparing his initial lectures on rhetoric and *belles lettres*, Blair had access to Smith's lectures. However, while Blair shared Smith's concern for proper English, his

preference for the plain style, and his belief that rhetorical principles were universal and thus could be applied to modern as well as ancient texts, Blair took a different approach to rhetoric than Smith, focusing on literary aesthetics and the appreciation of polite literature rather than ethics.

By emphasizing correctness and taste, Blair shifted rhetoric from its traditional role in preparing students to be producers of rhetoric as active agents in the political world—the *bonus orator*, if you will—to becoming consumers of rhetoric assimilating into the dominant culture while learning the more passive role of critic. As he notes in his first lecture from his book *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* (1783):

Of those who peruse the following Lectures, some, by the profession to which they addict themselves, or in consequence of their prevailing inclination, may have the view of being employed in composition, or in public speaking. Others, without any prospect of this kind, may wish only to improve their taste with respect to writing and discourse, and to acquire principles which will enable them to judge for themselves in that part of literature called Belles Lettres. (3)

Noting that most of his audience would fall into the second category, Blair wrote that “the same instructions which assist others in composition, will assist them in judging of, and relishing, the beauties of composition” (6). He goes on to note the many benefits associated with the development of a “cultivated taste”:

In an age when works of genius and literature are so frequently the subjects of discourse, when every one erects himself into a judge, and when we can hardly mingle in polite society without bearing some share in such

discussions; studies of this kind [criticism], it is not to be doubted, will appear to derive part of their importance from the use to which they may be applied in furnishing materials for those fashionable topics of discourse, and thereby enabling us to support a proper rank in social life.

But I should be sorry if we could not rest the merit of such studies on somewhat of solid and intrinsical use, independent of appearance and show. The exercise of taste and of sound criticism, is in truth one of the most improving employments of the understanding. To apply the principles of good sense to composition and discourse; to examine what is beautiful, and why it is so; to employ ourselves in distinguishing accurately between the specious and the solid, between affected and natural ornament, must certainly improve us not a little in the most valuable part of all philosophy, the philosophy of human nature. (6)

In the above encomium to criticism, Blair demonstrates his ability as a synthesizer. In a mere two paragraphs, he manages to tie together many of the forces associated with the rise of English—the desire to learn cultural correctness in order to interact successfully in polite society, the drive for upward mobility, the perceived superiority of the new rhetoric’s plain, unaffected style over the old rhetoric’s ornamental excesses, the shift to aesthetics and written discourse, Scottish common sense philosophy, and the increasing emphasis on science and human nature rather than the old logic and old rhetoric.

Blair believed that while taste and correctness could be taught, creativity and genius could not: “critical rules are designed chiefly to shew the faults that ought to be



avoided. To nature we must be indebted for the production of eminent beauties” (38). Creativity, he wrote, was a natural process “beyond the power of art” (180).

Like Smith, Blair rejected the common places of classical invention, stating that the “study of common places . . . could never produce useful discourses on real business.” Instead, he advised rhetors “to lay aside their common places, and to think closely on their subject” (qtd. in Crowley 1990, 11). Thus, writes Crowley, “In a single stroke, Blair placed the entire process of invention beyond the province of rhetorical study” (qtd. in Crowley 1990, 11).

Though archival evidence of Blair’s students’ essays is limited, what we do have indicates that Blair’s comments on their papers focused on correctness. According to Miller (1997),

Blair never bothered to discuss what the essays were about, how they might be situated in broader debates or social contexts, or what purposes they served. In a ruthlessly methodical fashion, he corrected each and every sentence with the sort of tedious attention to formal proprieties that have convinced generations of students that their English teachers are less interested in what they write about than in how they punctuate it. (238)

By shifting the focus of rhetoric to criticism and correctness, Blair instituted what would become known as current-traditional rhetoric.

George Campbell’s *Philosophy of Rhetoric* (1776) is second only to Blair’s Lectures in regards to its impact on the formation of college English. Like Blair, Campbell was a Presbyterian preacher as well as a professor. He first gained public

attention with the publication of his *Dissertation on Miracles* (1762), which challenged Hume's essay attacking miracles.

Campbell's *Philosophy of Rhetoric* was over twenty-five years in the writing. He wrote the first two chapters in 1750, then set it aside until 1757 when he moved to Aberdeen and became a founding member of the Aberdeen Philosophical Society along with Thomas Reid, James Beattie, and Alexander Gerard. He presented his first two chapters to the Society and with their encouragement wrote six more of the final eleven chapters of Book I over the next three years. However, he set it aside again in 1760, shifting his attention to completing his *Dissertation on Miracles* and his duties as newly appointed principal of Marischal College. In the mid-sixties, he worked on the Introduction as well as chapters of Books II and III. *Philosophy* finally was published in 1776, with chapters three, six, and ten of Book I written close to the time the book went to press and likely inspired by the attacks on syllogistic reasoning Reid and Kames published in 1774 (Howell 1971).

In *Philosophy of Rhetoric* (1776), Campbell, heeding the earlier call of Hume to base all learning in human nature, set out to ground the art of rhetoric in the science of human nature:

It is his purpose in this Work, on the one hand, to exhibit, he does not say, a correct map, but a tolerable sketch of the human mind; and, aided by the lights which the Poet and Orator so amply furnish, to disclose its secret movements, tracing its principal channels of perception and action, as near as possible, to their source: and, on the other hand, from the science of human nature to ascertain with greater precision, the radical principles of that art, whose object

it is, by the use of language, to operate on the soul of the hearer, in the way of informing, convincing, pleasing, moving, or persuading. (xlili)

Although Campbell criticized Hume's attack on miracles, he admitted that he owed a great debt to Hume. In fact in the Advertisement to *Dissertation on Miracles*, Campbell writes: "I have not only been much entertained and instructed by his works; but, if I am possessed of any talent in abstract reasoning, I am not a little indebted to what he hath written on *human nature*, for the improvement of that talent" (qtd. in Bitzer 1963, xiii)

Campbell's debt to Hume can be seen throughout *Philosophy*. He utilizes Hume's four faculties of the mind, his association of ideas, his principle of vivacity, his belief that our passions not reason rule our behavior, and other elements of Hume's philosophy in the text. Indeed, "Hume was the primary influence on Campbell's philosophy, including his philosophy of rhetoric," (xxv) writes Bitzer.<sup>4</sup>

Campbell (1776) begins *Philosophy* by linking rhetoric, or eloquence, to the four faculties of the mind—understanding, imagination, passions, and will: "there is no art whatever that hath such a close connexion with all the faculties and powers of the mind, as eloquence" (xlix). Campbell views the four faculties as a hierarchy with understanding as the bottom rung and will as the highest. Persuasion is, therefore, a four-step process that begins with instructing our understanding, proceeds with pleasing our imagination, arousing our passion, and, finally, motivating our will to act (Golden, Berquist, and Coleman 1992). As Campbell (1776) writes, "All the ends of speaking are reducible to four; every speech being intended to enlighten the understanding, to please the imagination, to move the passions, or to influence the will" (1).

According to Campbell, the basic principles of human nature underlying the art of rhetoric are as follows:

- 1) Knowledge and feelings are activated by our mental faculties.
- 2) We learn via experience.
- 3) The mind links ideas in an associative manner.
- 4) The mind devotes more attention and attaches greater belief to vivacious ideas.

Eloquence is “[t]hat art by which the discourse is adapted to its end” (1). The keys to effective rhetorical language, writes Campbell, are perspicuity and vivacity.

Perspicuity is the “predominant quality” required for instructing the understanding, while vivacity addresses the imagination, arouses the passions, and motivates the will.

Campbell divides deductive evidence into two categories, scientific and moral. Scientific evidence does not require rhetoric in Campbell’s view, just perspicuity. Rhetoric’s domain is that of moral evidence. And moral reasoning calls for natural logic, that is logic built upon experience, rather than syllogistic reasoning, which Campbell criticizes as “both unnatural and prolix” (62). Campbell’s criticism of the syllogism, observes Howell (1971), “is perhaps the most famous chapter on logic in any rhetorical treatise ever written” (401). In it, Campbell (1776) argues that syllogisms are guilty of a “begging of the question,” (66) since they prove what they’ve already established in their initial premise.

Instead of the syllogism, moral reasoning draws upon experience, analogy (which Campbell terms indirect experience), testimony (which might be termed third person experience), and the calculation of chances (probability) to make its case. By linking

rhetorical inquiry with empirical evidence, Campbell joined the new rhetoric with the methodology of the new science. As Howell (1971) observed,

the basic pattern of rhetorical argument for the new ages was that which would lead the audience to recognize intuitively the truth of the author's statement or would lead him to establish its truth from related facts or truths. This latter process was not syllogistic; it was more nearly in accord with the process of inference as described so memorably by John Locke. (444)

With Campbell, the role of invention focused on finding the most effective means of shaping discourse to engage the mental faculties to the desired aim of the rhetor.

Crowley (1990) writes that by focusing invention on the aims of the author, Campbell precipitated "a momentous innovation in invention theory" (15). Where previously classical rhetoric held that invention began with what other people thought, the new rhetoric placed invention squarely in the mind of the individual rhetor. What once had been considered "the stuff of invention—subjects, ideas, knowledge, discoveries, and thoughts, as well as aims or intentions," now "preceded discourse . . . exist[ing] in some coherent and knowable way prior to and outside of discourse" (16). And so by grounding rhetoric in human nature, Campbell shifted its orientation from the political to the psychological.

Like the dissenters, the Scots foreshadowed many of the changes that were to come in the modern American university and/or English studies, including the following:

- 1) Adopting English as the language of instruction
- 2) No religious affiliation required

- 3) Specialized professorships; Latin and Greek taught in standalone courses rather than integrated across the curriculum
- 4) Lockean epistemology rather than Aristotelian
- 5) Bellestristic rather than rhetorical approach to language study
- 6) Emphasis on proper English and English culture
- 7) Inductive logic rather than deductive
- 8) Expanded student body and desire for upward mobility
- 9) Common sense philosophy
- 10) Aesthetics and morality linked

See Table 8 for a listing of the educational innovations of the dissenters and Scots in relation to the classical college.

#### **1828—ENGLISH STUDIES LOOKS BACKWARDS AND FORWARDS**

In the study of the rise of English studies, the year 1828 stands Janus-like, simultaneously looking to English studies' past and its future. First, the backward glance. The Yale Report of 1828's defense of the classical curriculum and its assertion of the superiority of the "dead" languages over the modern in instilling mental discipline assured the continued dominance of the classical languages in the American College for another fifty-plus years.<sup>5</sup>

The second momentous occurrence of 1828 was the publication of Richard Whately's *Elements of Rhetoric*, the last of the big three texts on the new rhetoric. Like the depiction of the Roman god Janus, Whately's *Elements of Rhetoric* looks two directions at once. *Elements* looks backward to an Aristotelian view of the Old Rhetoric in that it limits rhetoric's domain to argument and emphasizes the logic of the syllogism

over empirical evidence. In his introduction to *Elements*, Whately writes that his treatise will examine "'Argumentative Composition,' generally and exclusively; considering Rhetoric (in conformity with the very just and philosophical view of Aristotle) as an offshoot from Logic" (6).

Table 8  
Dissenting Academy and Scottish University Innovations in Higher Education

	<b>Classical College</b>	<b>Dissenting Academies</b>	<b>Scottish Universities</b>
<b>Language(s) of Instruction</b>	Latin and Greek	English	English
<b>Method of Instruction</b>	Oral	Oral and Written	Oral and Written
<b>Epistemology</b>	Aristotelian	Lockean	Lockean
<b>Approach to Language Studies</b>	Old Rhetoric (Cicero)	New Rhetoric and Belletristic	Belletristic
<b>Approach to Logic</b>	Deductive	Inductive	Inductive
<b>Approach to Moral Philosophy</b>	Spiritual (Moral Philosophy)	Scientific (Moral Science)	Scientific (Moral Science)
<b>Approach to Knowledge Production</b>	Received Tradition	Free Inquiry	Free Inquiry
<b>Student Body</b>	Upper Class	Expanded to Middle Class and Women	Expanded to Middle Class
<b>Faculty</b>	Generalists	Generalists	Specialists
<b>Student's Goal</b>	Confirm one's respectable place in society	Upward Mobility	Upward Mobility
<b>Religious Affiliation</b>	Yes	Yes	Not required
<b>English Studies</b>	No	No	Yes
<b>Cultural Ideal</b>	Greek and Roman	English	English

On the other hand, *Elements* reaffirms the New Rhetoric standpoint on invention, style, delivery, and rhetorical proof (Howell 1971). In addition, Whately provides a more detailed account of how to achieve conviction (appealing to the understanding) and persuasion (appealing to the will) as well as how to most effectively arrange arguments.

Crowley (1990) writes that *Elements of Rhetoric* was adopted into American curricula almost immediately upon its American publication in 1832. Along with Blair and Campbell, Whately was one of the three “rhetorical names which almost every student in the nineteenth century college knew, and these were the men to dominate American rhetorical theory through 1850” (57). Whately’s influence, notes Crowley, dominated American curricula through the 1860s and continued to influence instruction throughout the nineteenth century.

The third momentous occasion of 1828 foreshadowed the future of English studies—the appointment of Reverend Thomas Dale at London University (later London College) as the first university Professor of English Language and Literature. London University was founded due to the efforts of two Scots, Thomas Campbell and Lord Henry Brougham. Campbell—poet, University of Glasgow graduate, and editor of *The New Monthly Magazine*—initiated efforts to found a nonsectarian, metropolitan university for the middle class. He was opposed by conservatives and religious leaders. However, Lord Henry Brougham—a prominent Whig politician and proponent of expanded education and free market enterprise—joined with Campbell to support the project. Eventually, Brougham took over the project himself, much to Campbell’s dismay. Brougham managed to convince supporters that the university should be secular. A utilitarian, Brougham’s chief motive in founding the university was to expand literacy



in order to expand political participation. Thus, the study of English was critical to his goal. Like Adam Smith, Brougham viewed the study of English as a means to political power (Court 1992). Accordingly, he took special interest in selecting the college's first Professor of Roman Language, Literature, and Antiquities.

Reverend Dale, who had applied earlier, and unsuccessfully, for the Professor of Roman Language, Literature, and Antiquities position at the new university, put in another application to be Professor of English Language and Literature. The twenty-four-member council could not agree on a candidate for the English professorship and so the matter was referred to a special education committee. Ultimately, the committee selected Dale, who was Brougham's choice. Dale's approach to the teaching of the English language emphasized the use of English literature and this appealed to the literacy advocates on the council.

In his *Introductory Lecture Delivered in the University of London* (1828), Dale lectured on English history and "philosophy" along with English literature, elocution, and composition. As you might expect of a clergyman who edited an edition of Blair's *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, Reverend Dale took a moralistic and belletristic approach to English studies: "in all my Lectures, more particularly when treating upon that glorious and inexhaustible subject, the LITERATURE of our country—I shall esteem it my duty—and I trust I shall find it my delight—to inculcate lessons of virtue, through the medium of the masters of our language" (qtd. in Miller 1997, 256).

Dale taught two courses, one on language and one on English literature. His language course, "The Principles and Practice of English Composition," was divided into three units: (1) history of the language, (2) philosophy of the language, and (3) use and

application of the language in speaking and composing. Units one and three drew heavily upon English literature. His literature course surveyed English literature according to three historical divisions: (1) early English compositions to Chaucer and Gower, (2) mid-fourteenth century through the seventeenth century, and (3) the eighteenth century. The course studied various genres including theological writings, romantic fiction, biography, history, essays, and periodical literature. In addition, Dale lectured on the relationship between literature and morality, American literature, English versus ancient literature, English versus French oratory, and pulpit eloquence (Court 1992).

Dale's courses, however, had low enrollment. Court suggests there were a number of reasons underlying the enrollment problem. One, Dale's evangelical Christian approach alienated some students as well as other faculty. Two, students who wished to go on to Cambridge or Oxford tended to sign up for "indispensable" courses that would help them gain admission. Naturally, English did not fall into this category. And three, Dale lost out in a power struggle with the professors of Greek, Latin, and Mathematics. In an attempt to boost enrollment, Dale wrote an appeal to the Council stating that students did not require Greek or Latin competency to enter his course. Naturally, this didn't sit well with the classical professors. In response, the Latin professor stated "that he trusted pupils who had entered for the Greek, English, and mathematical classes would *not* enter for the Latin" (Court 1992, 61).

Since Latin was an "indispensable" course for students who wanted to proceed to Oxford or Cambridge, this was a deathblow to enrollment for Dale's courses. Subsequently, Dale offered his resignation in 1830 and it was accepted. The Council

appointed Alexander Blair as his successor and added the following note: “The Council were of opinion that the subjects taught by that Professor would be better expressed by adopting the designation of English & Rhetoric” (qtd. in Court 1992, 66). And so the study of English literature was replaced with a program emphasizing rhetoric and composition. The irony of the first Professor of English Language and Literature being forced out by a Professor of Latin and the first course in English literature being replaced by rhetoric and composition is certainly amusing; however, these would prove to be but temporary setbacks to the rise of English and English studies and the corresponding fall of classical languages and rhetoric.

## CHAPTER SIX

# IMPORTING ENGLISH STUDIES

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*The first plausible date of consequence in the traceable history of English literary study in North America was 1742, the date when the Reverend Francis Alison, a Scots-Irish Presbyterian minister, appeared on record as combining the teaching of English grammar, composition, and literature at his academy at New London, Maryland, in an effort to preserve 'Old Side' Presbyterianism.*

—Franklin E. Court

*There is one Thing peculiar to the Miranians in there Exercises, which I had almost forgotten to mention; and that is that all their public Acts, Declamations, etc. are in the English Tongue.*

—William Smith

## ENGLISH PROHIBITED

In the American colonial college, not only was English not a subject but the use of the English language itself was forbidden except for certain circumstances. The Harvard Statutes of 1642 (written in Latin, of course) expressly forbade the use of English on college grounds:

Scholares vernacula lingua intra Collegii limites nullo praetextu utantur, nisi ad orationem aut aliud aliquod exercitum publicum Anglice habendum evocati fuerint. [Scholars shall, under no consideration, use their mother tongue within the limits of the college, unless summoned to deliver in English an oration or some other public exercise.]—Statuta Havardini 13, 1642, 1655, 1685.

Similar rules existed at Yale and Brown. While it is unlikely that they were ever strictly enforced, their mere existence reflects the disdain for English in the early American

college (as in the English classical college it was modeled after). Instead of English, the languages of choice at American colonial colleges were Latin and Greek as befitted institutions whose curriculum revolved around the *artes liberales* (liberal arts).

However, during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, some new English Study genes (to stick with my genetics metaphor) would be added to the American college gene pool. In some cases, these genes would be brought to America via immigrants; in others, they would be brought back by Americans who had traveled overseas.

#### **IMPORTING A DISSENTER AS PRESIDENT OF HARVARD (ALMOST)**

The first of these English Study genes to be imported to America came via the English Dissenters.<sup>1</sup> Charles Morton, who ran one of the largest and most significant dissenting academies in London from 1673 to 1686, immigrated to America when he was arrested for violating the laws prohibiting dissenters from teaching. In 1686 Morton set out for America with the expectation that he would become the president of Harvard. Morton had ties to the Harvard family from whence the college got its name. Morton's father, writes Morison (1636b), was a good friend of the Harvards and had arranged for John Harvard to attend Emmanuel College. Prior to his own departure to America, Morton sent his nephew to attend Harvard, noting in a letter to Harvard's acting president the Reverend Increase Mather that he'd sent his nephew "as pledge of my good will in your affairs" (qtd. in Morison 1936b, 476). At the time, it seemed certain Morton would be elected president, replacing Mather, who was a reluctant president and preferred not to add the Harvard presidency on top of his responsibilities to his Boston congregation.<sup>2</sup>

However, while Morton was making the transatlantic crossing, a political crisis erupted in the Massachusetts Bay Colony.

Massachusetts Bay had lost its Royal Charter in a court case in England in 1684. While Morton was at sea in 1686, an English ship arrived in the colony bearing Joseph Dudley with a royal commission as President of the Council of New England. A week later, the existing General Court of the Governor and Company of the Massachusetts Bay was adjourned indefinitely. Dudley was now in charge. As a result of Massachusetts Bay losing its charter, Harvard's viability was now in question as well.

In fact, Governor Cranfield of New Hampshire had already written letters to the Lords of Trade and Sir Leoline Jenkins, the King's principal Secretary of State, recommending that Harvard be closed. In his letter to the Lords of Trade, he claimed that Harvard's teachers "make it their business dayly to Excite and stirr them [the colonists] up to Rebellion being profest Enemies to the Kings Gouvernment and Church" (qtd. in Morison 1936c, 474-5). In the same letter, he noted that when Massachusetts Bay lost its charter, Harvard forfeited its as well. His letter to Sir Jenkins contained more of the same:

I haue obserued, That there can bee no greater evill attend his Majesties affaires here, then those pernicious Rebellious principles which flowes from their College at Cambridge which they call their Vniuersity from whence all the Townes both in this and the other Colonys are supplied with factious and Seditious Preachers who stirr up the people to dislike of his Majestie and his Gouvernment and the Religion of the Church of England. (qtd. in Morison 1936c, 475)

With the university in danger of closure, electing Morton as President was simply too big a risk to take. Instead, Dudley, who like three or four members of his Council was a Harvard man, appointed the Reverend Increase Mather Rector of Harvard. Mather, who had been acting as president since 1865, had his title changed to Rector. The title change, Morison (1936c) notes, was likely made so as not to be confused with Dudley's title as President of the Council.

After failing to obtain Harvard's presidency, Morton accepted the pulpit of Charlestown, which, ironically, John Harvard had once held. There, Morton set up an informal academy that attracted several Harvard students. Harvard felt so threatened by Morton that in December of 1686 when one its students was removed from Harvard for neglecting his studies and sent to Morton's academy, Mather sent a letter to Morton declaring that it would be "very offensive" to Harvard if Morton allowed the student to take refuge at his academy. Morton graciously gave up his academy and was later rewarded with an appointment as vice president of Harvard, a position created especially for him (Morison 1936c; Miller 1997).

Morton introduced a number of innovations to Harvard, including the study of modern languages, the use of experimental studies in natural philosophy, and the use of English rather than Latin as the language of instruction. In addition, he wrote textbooks on moral philosophy, logic, and physics. His physics textbook *Compendium Physicae* placed the latest discoveries in natural science into Aristotelian categories (Sloan 1971). Adopted as a standard physics text at Harvard in 1687, it remained a staple for forty years (Morison 1936a). Clearly, Morton exerted a great influence upon Harvard introducing a number of dissenter reforms; however, one can't help but wonder how American higher

education might have changed had Morton's expectation of the Harvard presidency been fulfilled.

### **THE SCOTTISH IMPORT**

In the eighteenth century, the Scots became the dominant influence behind educational reform in the American college.<sup>3</sup> Between 1700 and 1776 two hundred Scots-Irish left Ulster for North America, while most immigration directly from Scotland took place during the twelve-year period between 1763 and 1765. They brought with them two primary concerns: one, a fierce desire for independence, and, two, a firm belief in community education. Their Presbyterian ministers, who, like Hutcheson<sup>4</sup> and many of the Scottish literati, were both ministers and graduates of Scottish universities, personified the Scots' belief in education. Of the twenty-six ministers listed with the Presbytery of Philadelphia prior to 1717, sixteen finished their education at a Scottish university (Court 2001).

Naturally, they wanted to provide a similar opportunity for higher education to their clergy in the colonies. Since the existing three colleges in the American colonies—Harvard, William and Mary, and Yale—had other religious affiliations, Presbyterian leaders established the College of New Jersey (later Princeton) in 1746 to educate Presbyterian clergy and other professionals. In the next eighteen years, three other colleges would be founded with influential Scots and Scots-Irish connections—King's College (later Columbia University) in 1754, the College of Philadelphia (later the University of Pennsylvania) in 1756, and the College of Rhode Island (later Brown University) in 1764.



However, the first major Scottish influence on English studies didn't occur at a college but at an academy. As Court (2001) writes, "The first plausible date of consequence in the traceable history of English literary study in North America was 1742, the date when the Reverend Francis Alison, a Scots-Irish Presbyterian minister, appeared on record as combining the teaching of English grammar, composition, and literature at his academy at New London, Maryland, in an effort to preserve 'Old Side' Presbyterianism" (17). The Old-Siders were reacting to the threat posed by revivalist New-Siders who criticized the Old-Siders' "dead church" and the classical education system supporting it. The New-Siders had opened their own "Log Colleges," modeled after William Tennent's famous Log College, founded in 1735, north of Philadelphia, in Neshaminy.

In order to combat the threat of log colleges spreading New-Sider ideology, Alison opened the New London Academy. Alison believed the revivalists were anti-intellectual, and he wanted his academy to offer a broader curriculum than that of the log colleges. Toward that end, in 1746 he wrote to his friend and former teacher Francis Hutcheson for advice on books and the course of study. Hutcheson obliged and, not surprisingly, the New London Academy adopted a distinctly Hutchesonian philosophy.

In fact, Sloan (1971) credits Alison with introducing Hutcheson's theories to colonial America. Turnbull observed that the student transcripts of Alison's lectures were "Hutcheson verbatim" (Horner 1993, 175). Like Hutcheson, Alison required his students to write English abstracts of modern works. One of his favorite assignments was having them write abridgements of Hutcheson's *Short Introduction to Moral Philosophy*. Alison also utilized John Stevenson's technique of comparing classical writers to modern

ones (and may have first studied modern literature under Stevenson) (Court 2001).

Matthew Wilson, a student of Alison's, wrote approvingly of Alison's instruction:

We received the greatest advantage from his critical examination every morning of our themes, English and Latin, epistles, English and Latin, descriptions in verse, and especially our abstracts or abridgements of a paper from the Spectator or Guardian (the best standards of our language), substantially contracted into one of our exercises. (Sloan 1971, 77)

In 1752 Alison left the New London Academy to join the Philadelphia Academy.

There he was soon joined by another Scot, William Smith. Smith was an Episcopal clergyman and a graduate of King College in Aberdeen where he studied from 1741 to 1747 and likely was a student Thomas Reid. He came to the U.S. in 1751 and two years later published a pamphlet entitled *A General Idea of the College of Mirania*, describing his plan for establishing an ideal college (Court 2001).

*Mirania* drew heavily upon David Fordyce's *Dialogues concerning Education* (1745) and the curricular reforms at Marischal College inspired by Fordyce and later implemented by Alexander Gerard and Thomas Blackwell. Smith's ideal curriculum was based upon Hutchesonian moral philosophy and designed to produce, in the words of Adam Smith whom he quoted in his pamphlet, "a succession of sober, virtuous, industrious citizens" (qtd. in Court 2001, 21).

In *Mirania*, Smith advocated both the use of the vernacular and the study of polite literature. Miranians, wrote Smith (1753), "greatly condemn the practice of neglecting the mother tongue, and embarrassing a young student, by obliging him to speak or compose in a dead language" (36-7). The study of polite literature was promoted not

only as a method for improving a student's writing and speaking abilities but also, in an Arnoldian sense, as a means of social control since it contributed "highly to the cement of society and the tranquility of the state" (Court 2001, 21). In *Mirania*, Smith (1753) separated students into two groups—"those designed for the learn'd professions: by which they understand *Divinity, Law, Physic, Agriculture*, and the chief Offices of the State" and "those design'd for the Mechanic Professions, and all the remaining People in the State" (14). Students destined for the learned professions studied the ancient languages as well as English. However, students in the mechanics program studied English as their only language, as Smith noted in *Mirania*, "much like the English School in Philadelphia first sketched out by the very ingenious and worthy Mr. Franklin" (15).

When he finished *Mirania*, Smith sent it to a number of influential Philadelphians, including Benjamin Franklin, who, at the time, was president of the board of trustees for the Academy and Charitable School of Philadelphia. Smith's *Mirania* found a likeminded supporter in Franklin, whose own *Proposals for the Education of Youth* (1749) had drawn upon Fordeyce, George Turnbull, and possibly Alexander Gerard. With Franklin's recommendation, Smith was hired "upon Trial" in 1753 to teach at the Academy while funds were raised to open a college (Diamond 1990).

There, Smith joined Alison. The relationship between them was strained, as Alison feared that Smith would try and make the college into an Anglican stronghold, seeing as Smith had campaigned to be appointed an Anglican bishop to the colonies almost from the day of his arrival. Nevertheless, the two men were able to work together as they shared the same general educational ideals from their own Scottish university educations. As instructors, they complemented each other with Smith teaching natural

philosophy and Alison moral philosophy (Sloan 1971). Together, they proposed to the board of trustees that they establish a college to grant degrees. Their proposal was approved and in 1755, Smith became provost and Alison vice provost of the newly chartered, interdenominational College of Philadelphia. Their jointly constructed program of study was approved by the board on April 13, 1756 (Court 2001; Hook 1990).

In it, Smith listed a number of works for students to read on their own, including religious, classical, and scientific texts along with selections of English literature and literary criticism. Among Smith's recommendations were texts by Bacon, Locke, and Hutcheson; dramatic works by Sir William Davenant, Britain's poet laureate from 1638 through 1668; and essays from the *Spectator* and the *Rambler* selected "for improvement of style and knowledge of life" (qtd. in Court 2001, 23). Court (2001) notes that Smith's list may have comprised the first canon of English literary criticism in a colonial American college.

In "Where Do English Departments Come From?" William Riley Parker (1967) writes that Ebenezer Kinnersley headed an English school, associated with the College of Philadelphia in 1755, and held the title "professor of English Tongue and Oratory." Kinnersley continued at the college until 1773 when he resigned. Parker credits Kinnersley as "probably our first professor of English in any sense" (342). Little is known about Kinnersley; however, what seems certain is Francis Alison and William Smith, not Kinnersley, were responsible for the course of study at the College of Philadelphia.

Like the Old Siders, the New Siders adopted a Hutchesonian view of education. Indeed, Hutcheson's belief that emotion rather than reason led to truth fit perfectly with

revivalist theology. Hutcheson's civic humanism was also well suited to New Siders, who believed that evangelical Christians would naturally put their faith into action via public service. They also embraced the study of English literature as a method of teaching ethics and morality (Court 2001).

In 1761 Samuel Finley was appointed president of the College of New Jersey and revised the curriculum, giving even more prominence to the study of English and English literature, possibly due to the influence of Francis Alison and the College of Philadelphia. Two years later, he established an English Department to teach "young lads to write well, to cipher, and to pronounce and read the English tongue with accuracy and precision" (qtd. in Court 2001, 29-30). However, the department was eventually disbanded and its classes held outside the college.

In 1768 the Scottish Reverend John Witherspoon succeeded Finley as president.<sup>5</sup> Witherspoon had studied under John Stevenson at the University of Edinburgh and was a classmate of Hugh Blair's. However, he would end up opposing Blair's Moderate Party of the Scottish Presbyterian Church and supporting the more orthodox Popular Party.. Witherspoon also took a much more traditional approach to rhetoric than Blair. While Blair popularized the new rhetoric of criticism, aesthetics, and *belles lettres*, Witherspoon maintained the traditional Ciceronian view of rhetoric. Blair represented the new man of letters, Witherspoon the traditional *bonus orator*.

Witherspoon first attained public notice with the publication of *Ecclesiastical Characteristics* (1753), his satirical attack on the Moderate Party's politics and liberal theology that arose from Hutcheson and Shaftesbury's moral philosophy.<sup>6</sup> During the next thirteen years, Witherspoon's stock among orthodox Presbyterians continued to rise

and in 1766 he was elected to fill the College of New Jersey's presidency.<sup>7</sup> Neither an Old-Sider nor a New-Sider, Witherspoon appealed to both branches, which had unified in 1758. His support within the Popular Party of the Scottish church and his belief in the importance of conversion appealed to New-Siders; his insistence on sound doctrine and church authority appealed to Old-Siders; and his modern views on education and a learned clergy appealed to Old-Siders and New-Siders alike (Landsman 1990; Court 2001).

Landsman (1990) notes that Witherspoon's acceptance of the College of New Jersey's call was not a foregone conclusion. Witherspoon's wife didn't want to make the transatlantic voyage and Witherspoon had turned down three other calls. Ultimately, Witherspoon was persuaded by the entreaties of Benjamin Rush, a young medical student at Edinburgh, as well of those by leaders of the church who viewed the colonies as an opportunity to establish a more orthodox Presbyterian church. Before leaving Scotland, he sent 300 books to the College of New Jersey's library. Among them were works by Hutcheson, Hume, Adam Smith, and other contemporary Scottish writers (Court 2001).

The curriculum at the College of New Jersey had begun to change prior to Witherspoon's arrival. English, natural philosophy, and moral philosophy were being given more emphasis. The first year and a half emphasized classical studies; the next year and a half was spent on science, math, logic, rhetoric, history, geography, and moral philosophy; and the final year was devoted to review and composition, which included weekly public speeches. The only class specifically for religious studies was the option for the study of Hebrew during the junior year for aspiring clergy. This was quite

different from Harvard's curriculum, which emphasized classical studies and religion (Miller 1990b).

Witherspoon further reformed the curriculum. First-year students still followed a standard classical curriculum; however, during the second year, students studied the classics, mathematics, geography, and, Witherspoon's addition to the curriculum, English grammar and composition. The junior year focused on science, along with a series of lectures on history and eloquence, delivered by Witherspoon himself. The eloquence lectures included topics such as rhetoric, style, taste, literary criticism, and advanced English composition. During their senior year, students studied moral philosophy and heard Witherspoon deliver the same series of lectures as he did during their junior year (Court 2001).

The rising status of English vis-à-vis the classical languages can be seen in a recruiting address Witherspoon (1772) made to well-to-do Englishmen in the West Indies. During the address, Witherspoon noted that, beginning in 1771, students were awarded prizes for the best orations on the following subjects:

- (1) Reading the English language with propriety and grace, and being able to answer all questions on its Orthography and Grammar,
- (2) Reading with Latin and Greek languages in the same manner,
- (3) Speaking Latin,
- (4) Latin versions, and
- (5) English orations. (110)

In his course on moral philosophy, Witherspoon qualified Locke's empiricism with common sense philosophy, thereby providing a defense against Humean skepticism.

Witherspoon was of two minds regarding his greatest influence, Francis Hutcheson. Although he accepted Hutcheson's theory of the moral sense (which Witherspoon referred to as conscience), Witherspoon rejected the Hutchesonian synthesis of morality and aesthetics (Miller 1990b).

On the other hand, Sloan (1971) observed that Witherspoon's lectures on moral philosophy followed Hutcheson in organization, content, and form. Like Hume, Hutcheson, and other Scottish philosophers, Witherspoon believed in applying the empirical method to all fields. In fact, in his *Lectures on Moral Philosophy* (1801), Witherspoon observed that "the principles of duty and obligation must be drawn from the nature of man" (154). And finally, like Hutcheson, Witherspoon promoted the traditional Ciceronian concern with civic involvement.

In his *Lectures on Eloquence* (1801), Witherspoon discussed the staple topics of literary criticism, taste, and expression. However, while Blair approached eloquence from a critic's viewpoint, Witherspoon's primary concern was that of the practitioner, whether a preacher, a lawyer, or a statesman. In his lectures, he cited both the ancient authorities and modern writers (Sloan 1971). While Witherspoon advised his students to avoid vulgarities, he praised simplicity and the plain style. Correctness, however, was not Witherspoon's primary concern, but rather utility. He spent considerable attention discussing the three forums—the pulpit, the bar, and deliberative assemblies—where his students were most likely to practice (Miller 1990b).

Witherspoon's own participation as a citizen orator in the American Revolution is well noted. His sermon *The Dominion of Providence over the Passions of Men*, preached on May 17, 1776, advocated American independence, became the most famous sermon



of the period, was printed, and went through several British print editions (Sher 1990).

He led the movement to arrest New Jersey's loyalist governor William Franklin (Benjamin's son), served in the Continental Congress, taught James Madison at the College of New Jersey,<sup>8</sup> lost a son in the war, was burned in effigy along with Washington by General Howe's British army, and was one of the fifty-six signatories—and the only clergyman in the group—to sign the Declaration of Independence (Miller 1990b 27-35; Sloan 1971, 137-8). Later, John Adams praised him "as high a Son of Liberty as any Man in America" (Miller 1990b, 32).

Both Witherspoon and Hugh Blair credit their classes with John Stevenson at Edinburgh as the greatest influence on their education. Stevenson's two most famed students represent two different branches of his teaching. Blair, of course, championed the belletristic view of rhetoric that he first encountered in Stevenson's classroom. An early indication of his predilection can be seen in his student essay for Stevenson on the nature of beauty. Similarly, Witherspoon's predilection for moral philosophy is evident in his Latin thesis on the immutability of the soul which synthesizes Christian and Ciceronian viewpoints, employs a Lockean method of argument, and, what Miller (1990b) terms, "a rudimentary form of common-sense philosophy to demonstrate the continuity between reason and revelation" (5).

The scholarly paradox concerning Witherspoon is how does one reconcile Witherspoon's orthodox views toward religion and the state in Scotland with his political activism in the American colonies (Landsman 1990). At first glance, one would think the Scottish literati of the Moderate Party would be more likely to challenge state authority. However, the Moderates, believing the Scots must assimilate in order to thrive in Great

Britain, traded autonomy for opportunity. Thus, they supported the right of the church's General Assembly to appoint ministers over the objections of the local parishioners. Witherspoon disagreed on the basis of the traditional Calvinist belief that individuals have a duty to follow their conscience (Miller 1997). Perhaps, in a sense both the Moderates and Witherspoon were right. The Moderates were rewarded for acting upon their belief that Scotland's welfare was dependent upon their assimilation into Great Britain. On the other hand, Witherspoon was correct that America's welfare was best served by independence from Great Britain.

Witherspoon died in 1794. His *Lectures on Moral Philosophy* as well as his *Lectures on Eloquence*, both taken from his lecture notes, were published together posthumously in 1800-01. The most influential educator in America in the eighteenth century, Witherspoon delivered the Scottish Enlightenment to American higher education. Nevertheless, despite Witherspoon's influence and that of other reformers, English studies made only minimal headway versus the classical curriculum in the eighteenth century.

### **THE FRENCH IMPORT**

Histories of language studies in America have typically ignored or glossed over the eighteenth- and nineteenth-centuries as unscientific preludes to the advent of "real" language studies, i.e., linguistics, and the founding of the Linguistic Society of America on December 28, 1924.<sup>9</sup> However, as Andresen (1990) notes in *Linguistics in America 1769 – 1924*, the American colonists/citizens were very interested in language studies, albeit from the political approach characteristic of the French Ideologues rather than the mechanical approach of the German Romantics.

Given the colonists' fascination with the French Enlightenment, their alliance with France during the Revolutionary War, and the fact that they were fighting for independence, it isn't surprising that they embraced the French traditions of *idéologie* and *grammaire générale*, which associated language with nation. For the French Ideologues, writes Auroux, "the subject of *grammaire générale* is the human mind, reason equally distributed in each human being," while "*the subject of language [langue] is the nation*" (qtd. in Andresen 1990, 32; emphasis added).

This sort of cultural nationalism naturally appealed to many citizens in the newly independent United States. However, as David Simpson observed, "it was to prove more difficult to declare independence from Samuel Johnson than it had been to reject George III" (qtd. in Andresen 1990, 28). The notion that England's English was the correct English found adherents in America just as it had in Scotland. Thus, from the very beginning of the United States, there was a tension in American English between cultural nationalism and correctness.

The French concept of *idéologie* was introduced to America by two of leaders of the American Revolution, Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson. Franklin and Jefferson had met the French Ideologues during their visits to Parisian salons. In the aftermath of the Revolutionary War, Americans further embraced both French philosophy and nationalism.

Recognizing the connection between political power and language, John Adams argued for a national language academy like France's *Academie*. Ultimately, it was rejected. However, Adams' contention that over the next century English would become the language of power, the most universally read and spoken, and that Americans would

produce the most English speakers proved true. Similarly, Benjamin Rush predicted that English “will probably be spoken by more people, in the course of two or three centuries, than ever spoke any one language, at one time, since the creation of the world” (qtd. in Andresen 1990, 35).

Of course, the most influential American in terms of legitimizing American English was Noah Webster. In 1783 he published his famous blue-backed speller entitled *The First Part of a Grammatical Institute of the English Language*, which combined an alphabet, reader, primer, and speller. By standardizing spelling, Webster sought to promote national unity and a common culture. Six years later, Webster rewrote his *Grammatical Institute as Dissertations on the English Language* (1789). In it, Webster argued for a distinctive American English:

Customs, habits, and *language*, as well as government should be national. America should have her *own* distinct from all the world. Such is the policy of other nations, and such must be *our* policy, before the state can be either independent or respectable. To copy foreign manners implicitly, is to reverse the orders of things, and begin our political existence with the corruptions and vices which have marked the declining glories of other republics. (179)

Similarly, Webster predicted that unlike Europe with its variety of languages, “within a century and a half, North America will be peopled with a hundred millions of men, *all speaking the same language*” (21). Webster argued that since America would produce more English speakers than England it would be foolish to use English custom over American practice in deciding linguistic matters for Americans. However, that is but a justification for Webster’s belief that “[a]s an independent nation, our honor

requires us to have a system of our own, in language as well as government” (20). The authority for language regulation, according to Webster, was a matter of common consent: “the practice of a nation . . . has, in most cases, the force and authority of law; it implies mutual and general consent, and becomes a rule of propriety” (92).

Others, however, championed “proper” British English. Just as Beattie had coined the term “Scotticisms” to refer to Scottish idioms that should be avoided, Witherspoon coined “Americanisms” as a pejorative in 1781 for American “barbarisms” and “corruptions” of “proper” British English (Simpson 1986; Halloran 1990).<sup>10</sup> Benjamin Franklin and John Pickering, a leading American language scholar of the early nineteenth century, also spoke out in favor of “proper” English. Jefferson, on the other hand, was a linguistic liberal who encouraged neology (coining new words) and wrote that the diversity of American culture and geography called “for new words, new phrases, and for the transfer of old words to new objects” (qtd. in Simpson 1986, 32). Indeed, Jefferson is credited with coining the noun “breadstuffs” and the verb “to belittle” (40-1).

However, “proper” English continued to dominate textbook sales prior to 1800, as the most popular language text in America remained the traditional British speller, Thomas Dilworth’s *New Guide to the English Tongue*. Similarly, the most popular grammar text was *English Grammar* (1795), by the American-born Lindley Murray, who moved to England and modeled his texts on Lowth’s British text. Eventually though, Webster’s Manifest Destiny view of American English would win out.

#### **MODERN LANGUAGE STUDIES IN POST-REVOLUTIONARY AMERICA**

The study of modern language in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century post-revolutionary America took place outside the academy. The American college

focused on the classical languages and regarded modern languages such as English as too easy for college study. Franklin, Jefferson, and Webster were the most influential Americans of their time regarding modern language study.

Franklin, as was noted earlier, was the first to propose the use of English rather than classical languages in American higher education. In 1750 his *Idea of an English School*, called for “a utilitarian education for citizenship conducted entirely in the English language” (Parker 1967, 342). A year later, with Franklin’s support, the Philadelphia academy, which would eventually become the College of Philadelphia and later the University of Pennsylvania, was opened with an “English School.” There Smith and Alison would bring the Scottish revolution to America and Kinnersley would become the first American professor of English.

As a printer, Franklin was naturally interested in issues such as spelling reform, “standard” English, and English’s status as a language internationally, seeing as each of these issues affected potential printing profits. And though Franklin, along with Jefferson, introduced the French political view of language to America, he is also in some respects responsible for importing the German mechanical view of language to America. Franklin was the first American to visit Göttingen in 1766. Forty-five years later, following in his footsteps, *die neuen Amerikaner* (Everett, Ticknor, Cogswell, and Bancroft) went to Göttingen and brought German view of language and scholarship back with them. Perhaps Franklin’s greatest influence in language study, however, was his founding of the American Philosophical Society in 1769. Based loosely on England’s Royal Society, the American Philosophical Society promoted science, including the study of language (Andresen 1990).

Thomas Jefferson's predilection for languages is well known. Having learned Latin and Greek as part of his classical education, Jefferson also was proficient in Italian, French, and Spanish. His "great" library, which was eventually purchased by the U.S. government to replace the Library of Congress that had been burned in the War of 1812, contained 602 titles falling into the category of "literature and language." Like Franklin and Webster, Jefferson was in favor of spelling reform. Unlike Franklin, he was a "linguistic liberal," who tried to preserve dialects. Jefferson actively promoted the study of American Indian languages and other modern languages. Though he did advocate the German view of language, Jefferson kept up with German thought. He corresponded with Ticknor in 1815-16 while Ticknor was studying at Göttingen, and he hired the German philologist Dr. Georg Blaettermann to teach at the University of Virginia, thereby bringing the German view into the academy (Andresen 1990).

Just as Franklin introduced English into American higher education, Jefferson institutionalized Anglo-Saxon at the University of Virginia, of which he was the chief architect (in both senses of the word). While utility and upward mobility motivated Franklin to introduce the study of English,<sup>11</sup> culture was the rationale underlying Jefferson's advocacy of Anglo-Saxon. Jefferson believed in what legal historians now refer to as the "Saxon myth," that Saxon was the authentic basis of both modern English and democracy. Studying Old English, Jefferson believed, would enable one to uncover the "true" laws of democracy and English jurisprudence. Jefferson tried, unsuccessfully, to make Anglo-Saxon a national requirement.

Jefferson also emphasized modern language study (in addition to Greek and Latin) at the University of Virginia. The Department of Modern Languages included

French, Spanish, Italian, and German in addition to Anglo-Saxon. Jefferson's fascination with the study of American Indian languages would become one of the central concerns of modern language study in the first half of the nineteenth century. And finally, like Franklin, Jefferson served as President of the American Philosophical Society (Andresen 1990).

On the other hand, Noah Webster would not even be elected as a member of the American Philosophical Society until 1827. Andresen (1990) suggests that Webster's difficult personality may have had something to do with this along with the fact that once Franklin died in 1790, Webster lost his biggest supporter. Unlike Franklin, Jefferson had little use for Webster, describing him in a letter as a "mere pedagogue, of very limited understanding" (qtd. in Andresen 1990, 63).

Webster also has received more criticism than either Franklin or Jefferson, partly because he lived until 1843 and thus was still alive as the German view of language superseded the political view espoused by Franklin, Jefferson, and Webster. For his part, Webster rejected the German view of language and scholarship. He was derided in the press by Pickering in 1837 for his lack of knowledge of the language work of Germans such as Humboldt, Grimm, and Bopp. Webster was also criticized heavily, and justifiably so, for his faulty etymologies. In fact, a German-trained linguist was brought in to redo the etymologies for the famed 1864 edition of Webster's dictionary (Andresen 1990).

In the end, however, Webster prevailed. His blue-backed speller and dictionaries forever changed American English. Webster's blue-backed speller published in 1783 as *The First Part of a Grammatical Institute of the English Language* displaced Dilworth's



English speller “Aby-sel-pha,” published in London in 1740, selling millions of copies, and remaining an best-seller for nearly a century. In it, Webster combined an alphabet, primer, speller and reader. His spelling lists reformed and standardized American spelling (Applebee 1974). The third part of the *Grammatical Institute* entitled *An American Selection of Lessons in Reading and Speaking* (1795) featured selections chosen for their patriotic and ethical values along with their usefulness for developing elocution. In the past, such texts had always focused on religious themes. Thus, Webster’s text was a step toward secularizing education. *An American Selection* and the grammar that comprised the second part of the *Grammatical Institute* never reached the popularity of the blue-backed speller, but still remained staples for half a century (Applebee 1974). Webster’s dictionaries were even more influential. While the very idea of an American dictionary was ridiculed in 1801, Webster’s dictionaries eventually were acknowledged as the authority on American language and still are selling today (Mencken 1948; Andresen 1990).

By 1815 attitudes toward language studies were changing. Traditionally, European and American linguistic historians have referred to the 30 years between 1785 and 1815 as the “hinge period” in language studies. In America 1815 marked both the year the American Philosophical Society added a seventh committee—the Committee on History, Moral Science, and General Literature—and the founding of the *North American Review*. Both events would have important consequences for language study. The Committee on History, Moral Science, and General Literature firmly established Native American language studies as a priority of the Society, while the founding of the *North*

*American Review* provided a much-needed forum for linguistics and championed linguistic nationalism.

As the second decade of the nineteenth century drew to an end, a new generation of American language scholars arose, including the two men who would become the two most influential American philologists of the first half of the nineteenth century: Pierre Duponceau and John Pickering. The French born, naturalized citizen Pierre Duponceau published his first work in linguistics in 1818 (which he read before the American Philosophical Society in 1817), sending a copy to both Jefferson and Pickering. Pickering responded, beginning a lifelong friendship. Duponceau and Pickering had a lot in common. Both men were lawyers and gentlemen scholars, both studied and published on American Indian languages as well as American English, both were influenced by the French political view of language studies, and neither ever held an academic position.<sup>12</sup>

However, they had some differences. Pickering, as noted earlier, was critical of Americanisms and called for “proper” English. Duponceau, on the other hand, a non-native speaker, was more interested in the variety among languages. Duponceau, as might be expected, was more committed to French thought. Pickering, who was seventeen years younger than Duponceau, took a middle ground position between the French political view of language and the German mechanical view. “Pickering’s work,” writes Andresen (1990), “is delicately balanced between the new German methods and his experience as an early nineteenth-century American, that is a person highly aware of the political dimensions of language” (109). He corresponded with Bopp and Humboldt, and championed German methodology.

In his 1820 article in the *North American Review*, Pickering urged Americans “to study human speech as a science” (qtd. in Andresen 1990, 42). In so doing, Pickering hoped to legitimize the study of language per se, independent of literature. Duponceau immediately recognized the value of Pickering’s idea. In a letter to Pickering, he wrote:

The idea of the phenomena of language is new and beautiful. . . . It will give rise to more new ideas and things than you are aware of. A noble book is wanted in philology, — the Phenomena of Human Language. You are worthy of writing the book, since the idea is yours; if you do not, it will be written, for this is a mother-idea that will create a new title in philological literature. I should be jealous of that idea, which I would have given much to have conceived and developed as you have. Humboldt has understood it, and paid its author due homage for it. (qtd. in Andresen 1990, 108-9)

As the hinge period in language studies ended, modern languages were not integrated into the college curriculum. The first professorship of modern languages in America wasn’t established until 1816 with the founding of the Smith Professorship of French and Spanish at Harvard (Eliot 1890). Even then, it is instructive to note that neither English nor German were included. However, the first holder of the Smith Professorship was none other than George Ticknor, one of the four *neuen Amerikaners* then studying at Göttingen, who would not return until August 1819 to take up his new post (Morison 1936).

### **THE GERMAN IMPORT**

The German import—philology—didn’t appear in America until the nineteenth century, but would prove critical for the acceptance of English studies into the curriculum

of the American college. The term “philology” was coined by Plato; however, the modern discipline of philology emerged and was institutionalized in Germany at the University of Göttingen in 1737 (Clark 1984). The modern conception of philology, “i.e., not simply the critical reconstruction of texts but the comprehensive activity of seeking to understand historical cultures through textual analysis and interpretation,” (Leventhal 1994, 245) began in Germany around 1770.

There were two preconditions for the rise of modern philology—a historical self-consciousness first evidenced in the writings of Johann Gottfried Herder, and a new view of semiotics espoused by Herder along with Georg Christoph Lichtenberg. Both Herder and Lichtenberg challenged the underlying assumption of Enlightenment semiotics that thought preceded language. Instead, they argued that language shaped thought. As a result of these developments, the focus of philology shifted from textual reconstruction to interpretation.

Christian Gottlob Heyne, Professor of Eloquence and Philology at the University of Göttingen from 1763 to 1812, was the first to lecture publicly on the interpretive approach to philology in his seminar. While previous philological study in Germany had focused on reconstructing authoritative texts such as the bible, Heyne instituted

a new emphasis on interpretation directed toward the totality of the work and its relation to other works, historical context, and questions of cultural difference; the dissolution of boundaries between philological interpretation and critique, history, art and archaeology, and aesthetics, and a stress on the enduring significance of philological study, not merely for antiquarian

interests, but for an understanding of the contemporary world. (Leventhal 1994, 256)

Heyne's seminar replaced the old methods of recitation and disputation with dialogue and interpretation. This shift in method, according to Leventhal, marked the birth of the modern seminar. Well aware that his seminar had changed the role of students, Heyne observed that his students

might be motivated not to let their studies rest at listening to lectures and reading but rather to be awakened to their own individual activity, to reflect on what they have heard, to write down what they have thought. . . . The faculty of understanding must more easily acquire the faculty to assimilate what is heard and read. (qtd. in Leventhal 1994, 257)

This reformulation of the seminar at Göttingen in 1760s, writes Clark (1984), transformed the role of the student: "The passive mastery of a canonically prescribed corpus of philological material gives way to the active cultivation of philological abilities through participation" (130). In the new seminar "one learnt how to be a philologist, a 'researcher'" (130).

Frederich Wolf became Heyne's first official student of philology in 1777 when he refused to register in the faculties of law or theology, despite Heyne's insistence that those were the only professional options for a classical education. Instead, Wolf called himself a philologist, a profession Heyne informed him did not exist (Diehl 1978).

Wolf's subsequent career changed that and he is considered by some as the central figure in the development of the institution of philology.<sup>13</sup> Wolf defined the objects of philological study in broad terms, including "grammar, criticism, geography, political

history, customs, mythology, literature, art, and ideas of a people” (Applebee 1974, 25).

Though Wolf was interested in the cultures of Greece and Rome, his followers gradually expanded their study to other cultures and modern languages. Through their studies, philologists hoped to discover the underlying basis of national culture and race (Applebee 1974; Graff 1987).

Philology was imported to America in the second decade of the nineteenth century when the first of *die neuen Amerikaner* returned from their studies at Göttingen. However, as Diehl (1978) observes, that first generation of Americans to study in Germany were both attracted and repelled by the study of philology. While they recognized the value of philological scholarship, *die neuen Amerikaner* would eventually all reject their initial desire to become German-like scholars.

Everett, the first American to receive his German Ph.D. (1817), offered three reasons why Americans abandoned German scholarship. One, he pointed out that American students were not as well prepared as their German counterparts. Two, he notes that Americans often did not stay in Germany long enough. And three, that upon returning to America, they had no real outlet for their scholarship. Ironically, Everett’s own experience counters his reasons. Yes, American students were behind German students. However, Everett and his compatriots were all very bright. Indeed, Everett was considered Harvard’s brightest student in several years (Morison 1946). The intelligence of *die neuen Amerikaner* combined with their well-chronicled, prodigious efforts in their studies enabled them to catch up rather quickly. And if further confirmation is needed, we have the opinion of their German professors who uniformly recalled *die neuen Amerikaner* as excellent students. Upon closer examination, Everett’s second reason—

lack of time in Germany—does not appear to be a major issue either. Everett and Bancroft (1820) both managed to earn their Ph.D.'s in just two years. Besides, most Americans stayed three or four years and could have extended their time in Germany if they wished, writes Diehl (1978). And finally, while some Americans may have lacked an outlet for their scholarship, that certainly was not the case with Everett. After all, he had already secured a Harvard professorship before leaving for Germany. So why did *die neuen Amerikaner* turn away from German scholarship?

Diehl (1978) suggests that their change of heart was not due to the reasons Everett mentioned or from a lack of research facilities in America as others have speculated, but rather the result of complex psychological reasons. Certainly, they were all impressed by the philological scholarship of the Germans, Bancroft wrote of Wolf:

He is a genius of the first order; one of the few great men whom it has been my lot to meet with in Germany [he had already met Goethe, Wilhelm von Humboldt, and Schleiermacher, among others]. Hated by his countrymen, he consoles himself with being the most learned man on the Continent. He has a fondness for the ancient languages, & is alive to the beauties of their literature. (qtd. in Diehl 1978, 72)

However, while the Americans were impressed by German scholarship, they were disdainful of the professionalization of German higher education. In a letter to Kirkland, Bancroft observed:

A German man of letters is very different from the idea formed of a scholar in America. Here learning is not ever the companion in public life, nor the beautifier of retirement, nor the help & comforter in affliction, but is attended

to as a trade, is cultivated merely because one can get a living by it. (qtd. in Diehl 1978, 90)

At the time, of course, teaching college was not considered a profession in America. Even though *die neuen Amerikaner* would be returning to positions at Harvard, they were disdainful of those who taught for a living. Everett quickly gave up his position to enter politics.

*Die neuen Amerikaner*—all upper class, Puritans—were also offended by the morals and manners of the Germans. Bancroft described the “wretchedly rough manners” of the German students, who scraped their feet on the floor during lectures to note their disapproval. He also noted that at a university dinner, they ran out of wine but not before, “each made the best of his way home, the skins of the professors pretty full” (qtd. in Nye 1944, 38).<sup>14</sup> *Die neuen Amerikaner* and their sponsors also feared the possible corrupting effect of German theology. In another letter to Kirkland, Bancroft assured his sponsor that he is not being led astray:

I add one word about German Theology. I have nothing to do with it except so far as it is merely critical. Of the infidel systems I hear not a word, and I trust I have been too long under your eye, and too long a member of the Theological Institution under your inspection to be in danger of being led away from the religion of my Fathers. (qtd. in Diehl 1978 84).

Still, Bancroft, who had been sent to Germany to study theology, would abandon it for history.

Diehl (1978) contends that philology itself was at the center of the Americans’ anxiety regarding German scholarship. He theorizes that philology presented a



“substitute, secular religion” (98) that threatened the orthodox religious beliefs of *die neuen Amerikaner* and their sponsors. Certainly, for Bancroft, the fact that he had been sent to Germany by President Kirkland to study theology may have played a factor in both his guilt over his attraction to philology and his ultimate rejection of it.

Everett, who had been awarded the Eliot Professorship of Greek Literature (an endowed position) before leaving for Germany, seemingly was in a perfect position to take advantage of his training in German scholarship. However, Diehl (1978) notes that Everett’s “disaffection is a puzzling psychological phenomenon, and one that is not explained by commonsense ‘reasons’ which cite the conditions of study in Germany and America. Moreover, as abrupt and puzzling as his disavowal of classical scholarship was, it must also have been genuine and profound. . . . He never again immersed himself in philology” (78). Cogswell, the oldest of *die neuen Amerikaner*, lamented that with his late start he would never be able to catch up to his German masters. And Ticknor ended up focusing on his studies in Madrid of the history of Spanish language and literature.

In any case, none of *die neuen Amerikaner* pursued philology upon their return. Diehl (1978) observes that “the anxiety” of *die neuen Amerikaner*

is clear and manifest. Most of them pulled back from a complete acceptance of German academic and scholarly values. Though wanting to learn everything, they studied only languages. Though appreciating the work of the most daring and advanced scholarship, they disavowed such endeavors. They saw the German academic system as an alien thing, an alien trade, not just because Kirkland wanted them to, or simply because it was theologically or politically safe to, but because it was psychologically necessary for them to.

Having been tempted by it, Americans made the modern form of scholarship as it developed in Germany an alien thing. (100)

As a result, “not one of them came back a real classical philologist or anything else that the Germans of the day would have recognized as a scholar” (Diehl 1978, 73).

Nevertheless, they brought home with them a reverence for German style scholarship and education. And, even Diehl (1978) admits that they returned “with a certain amount of messianic zeal” (73). Upon his return, Everett became the first editor of the *North American Review*. In 1819 Ticknor, as mentioned earlier, became the first American professor of modern languages and a leading proponent of educational reform along the lines of Germany. Cogswell returned to Harvard as Librarian and rearranged the college’s library to resemble Göttingen’s. George Bancroft came back to Harvard in 1822 as a Greek tutor, replacing the recitation in his classes with the German lecture and grouping students according to their ability. A year later, he and Cogswell left Harvard, frustrated by the opposition of Kirkland and the Corporation to reform, to found the experimental Round Hill School, which they modeled on the German *gymnasia*.

Though they may not have become German-style scholars and though their efforts at reforming American higher education fell far short of their desire, *die neuen Amerikaner* did succeed in making Germany the destination for would-be American scholars. It would remain for a future generation of American students who studied in Germany to introduce philology to the American curriculum.

While *die neuen Amerikaner* were studying at Göttingen, the Germans Bopp (1816) and Grimm (1819) published their first language studies, and though they regarded themselves as philologists, linguists would later claim them as the first of their

breed, i.e., scholars more concerned with language than the traditional literary orientation of classical philology. In America and abroad, the influence of the French Ideologues was dwindling, replaced by a German mechanical view of language. As the linguistic historian Benfey noted:

With the year 1819 came into the realm of German philology—above all the linguistic [sprachwissenschaftlichen] branch of it—a turning point, which not merely brought about a complete transformation, but also for linguistics [die Sprachwissenschaft] as a whole was of the deepest meaning. (qtd. in Andresen 1990, 73)

### **1828 REDUX**

The year 1828 serves as a convenient dividing line for the study of modern languages in America. On the one hand, it marks the year of the *Yale Report*; and on the other hand, it marks the year Webster published his famed *American Dictionary*. The former publication sought to prevent the rise of modern languages in higher education; the latter promoted the rise of American English. By 1828 *die neuen Amerikaner* had all returned to America. But by 1828 only Ticknor remained at Harvard, the others having already abandoned higher education. In 1828 there were no professional scholars in the American college. Yet by 1828 the days of the gentleman scholar were drawing to an end. In 1828 neither the English language nor English literature had infiltrated the classical curriculum as a standalone subject, but by 1828 English had become the language of instruction. In 1828 oratory was still a focus of the classical curriculum; yet by 1828 rhetoric was understood as encompassing both speech and written communication. By 1828 the innovations of the Dissenters, the ideals of the Scottish

Enlightenment, the French political view of language, and German philology and scholarship had all been imported to America if not American higher education. The gene pool from which English studies in America would emerge had been significantly enlarged though the species itself had yet to appear in the American classical college.

#### **ENGLISH STUDIES AT HARVARD (EDWARD TYRELL CHANNING)**

In the light of the various forces for and against change, it is instructive to examine what happened at Harvard during the years between the Revolutionary War and 1828. Neither as progressive as schools such as Miami University (see Chapter 2) nor as conservative as Yale, Harvard's approach to English fell somewhere between these two extremes.

While the College of Philadelphia and the College of New Jersey were introducing the new rhetoric to students in the 1750s, 60s, and 70s, Harvard's classical curriculum remained virtually unchanged. It wasn't until the 1780s that the influence of the Scottish Enlightenment began to be felt. And it wasn't until 1786 that a course in English was offered.<sup>15</sup> By 1788 an abridgement of Blair was being used. And by 1791 professors lectured on the English language once a week and held yearly examinations on English grammar and rhetoric (Court 2001). However, the real revolution in instruction in what would later become English studies at Harvard didn't take place until the nineteenth century after the establishment of the Boylston Professor of Rhetoric and Oratory (Anderson and Braden 1968).<sup>16</sup>

The Boylston Professor was charged with instructing students in classical rhetoric, both speaking and writing, through public and private lectures. The public lectures were to cover the history of oratory, to prescribe methods for composing

sermons, and to discuss ways of improving eloquence. The private lectures were designed to teach undergraduates how to read and write through exercises in reading, speaking, and writing. The first two Boylston Professors followed these guidelines for teaching classical rhetoric and oratory. The third, Edward Tyrell Channing, did not.

Channing, who was appointed Boylston Professor of Rhetoric and Oratory in 1819 and would hold the position for 32 years, brought the Scottish influence to Harvard and shifted the emphasis from rhetoric and oratory to oratory and criticism. A collection of his lectures, published in 1856, demonstrate his emphasis on oratory and literary criticism as well as his reliance upon Scottish moral philosophy. Channing's belief in empiricism, the expanded domain of rhetoric, Reid's intellectual and active power of the mind, and the need to ground rhetoric in human nature are all indicated in his lecture on his "General View of Rhetoric":

I am inclined to consider rhetoric, when reduced to a system in books, as a body of rules derived from experience and observation, extending to all communication by language and designed to make it efficient. It does not matter whether a man is a speaker or writer,—a poet, philosopher, or debater; but simply—is it his wish to be put in the right way of communicating his mind with power to others, by words spoken or written. It so, rhetoric undertakes to show him rules or principles which will help to make the expression of his thoughts effective; and effective, not in any fashionable or arbitrary way, but in the way that nature universally intends, and which man universally feels. For all genuine art is but the helpmate of nature.

(Anderson and Braden 1968, 30-2)

Scholars agree that Channing's major influence was Thomas Reid, "whose ideas," note Anderson and Braden (1968), "and those of his follower, Dugald Stewart, permeated the thinking of American academic communities, especially Harvard, during the late eighteenth century and well into the nineteenth century" (xxi). Like Reid and other moral sense philosophers, Channing believed in the link between aesthetic beauty and morality. Indeed, Chavrat declared Channing "perhaps the most important individual of his time" in disseminating Scottish aesthetics (qtd. in Court 2001, 61).

In his inaugural lecture, "The Orator and His Times," Channing called for the modern orator to pay more attention to the altered temper of modern times. During the 1820s, a national debate arose in America over the merits of teaching the ancient languages and literature over the modern languages, particularly English, and modern literature. Chandler had already indicated his position in an article entitled "On Models in Literature" for the *North American Review* back in 1816, when he wrote that independent thinking was threatened "by inculcating an excessive fondness for the ancient classicks, [sic] and asserting their supremacy in literature" (Anderson and Braden 1968, xxvi-xxvii).

Although he'd initially used the same texts as his predecessors—Robert Lowth's *English Grammar* and John Walker's *Rhetorical Grammar* for first-year students, Cicero's *De Oratore* and Blair's *Lectures* for sophomores—Channing significantly de-emphasized the use of textbooks in his classes beginning in 1827. Under his new course plan, first-year students spent only two weeks studying Robert Lowth's *English Grammar*; the rest of the year no textbooks were required. Instead, Channing wanted his students to study contemporary oratory in the society around them. Over the next twelve

years, Channing continued to alter the required texts and course of study for his classes. However, in 1839-40, he designed a course of study that changed little over the rest of his tenure. Sophomores devoted one term to Lowth's *Grammar*, Ebenezer Porter's *Analysis of Rhetorical Delivery*, and Books II and III of Richard Whately's *Philosophy of Rhetoric*; juniors studied Whately's *Elements of Logic* for a term; and seniors studied Whately's *Elements of Rhetoric* during their first term (Anderson and Braden 1968).

Channing, like the Scottish new rhetoricians, took a broad view of rhetoric as the basic art underlying all speech and written expression. Like Reid, Channing believed criticism, i.e. "taste" and "judgment," could be improved via education. Anticipating Matthew Arnold, Channing taught criticism by exposing his students to "the best and most characteristic of English eloquence" (qtd. in Court 2001, 71). In addition, students were assigned themes for writing and speaking exercises. Until 1845 when Channing had to reduce the number of themes due to larger class sizes, students wrote approximately 18 themes a year from their sophomore through their senior year. Even after 1845, students were assigned themes every three to four weeks (Anderson and Braden 1968).

Channing's teaching methods produced many of the most recognized speakers and writers of the first half of the nineteenth century, including Emerson, Thoreau, Oliver Wendell Holmes, James Russell Lowell, Edward Everett Hale, Charles Eliot Norton, Charles Francis Adams, and Francis James Child. Regarding Channing, Edward Everett Hale wrote that "Harvard College trained the only men in America who could write the English language, and that its ability to do this began with the year 1819, and ended with the year 1851" (Anderson and Braden 1968, xi). Similarly, Harvard's great historian

Samuel Eliot Morison (1936b), noted Channing's role in promoting the classic diction associated with Harvard graduates: "Channing and Edward Everett may be said to have created the classic New England diction—the measured, dignified speech, careful enunciation, precise choice of words, and well modulated voice that (for men of my age at least) will always be associated with President Eliot" (216-7).

Although Channing was a student of literature and although he regularly assigned literary subjects for his student's themes, he believed the study of literature for its own sake was beyond rhetoric's domain. He viewed the study of literature itself as extracurricular, and, in fact, led voluntary classes for interested students on English poetry and established authors in his study. Interestingly, George Ticknor, who came to Harvard as the Smith Professor of French and Spanish Languages and Belles Lettres the same year Channing assumed the Boylston Chair, took the opposite approach and emphasized literature in his classes. However, for Channing, oratorical skill was the goal and literature merely a means toward it. Perhaps that is the reason why Channing apparently resisted the inclusion of literature in the Department of Rhetoric and Oratory. The fact that literature was immediately added upon his retirement certainly suggests he had some role in its exclusion. Even more indicative of the changes to come is that his successor as Boylston chair, Francis J. Child, changed the title of the lectures given to seniors from "Rhetoric and Criticism" to "English Language and Literature" (Anderson and Braden 1968).



## CHAPTER SEVEN

# LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE DURING THE YALE REPORT YEARS 1828 - 1870

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*Modern languages, with most of our students, are studied, and will continue to be studied, as an accomplishment, rather than as a necessary acquisition.*

—The Yale Report

*English should be studied like Greek.*

—Francis March

### MODERN LANGUAGES

The success of the Yale Report in turning back the reform efforts of the 1820s left little room for English studies in the curriculum. The typical college program of study centered upon Greek, Latin, and math; also included courses in logic, theology, history, and natural science; and culminated in the study of moral or intellectual philosophy in the senior year. Although students could take electives in English, modern languages, and science during their junior and senior years, the demands of their required courses left them little time or motive to do so (Graff 1987; Kitzhaber 1953).

Classicists viewed English, which unlike Latin and Greek is an uninflected language, as simply too easy. According to the doctrine of mental discipline, education sought to train mental faculties, particularly, those of “memory” and “reason.” The difficulty of the classical languages was cited as proof of their superiority in instilling mental discipline. Their rule-governed syntax, complex structure, and unfamiliar vocabulary were viewed as particularly well-suited for such training (Applebee 1974).

In contrast, the study of English was perceived as lacking academic vigor, “studied, as an accomplishment” sniffed the Yale Report, “rather than as a necessary acquisition” (qtd. in Hofstrader and Smith 1961, 290).

As a result, the study of the English language was relegated to those institutions—finishing schools for girls, business schools, and schools for the blind, deaf, and feeble-minded—whose students were deemed unable to handle the rigors of the classical languages. In fact, as late as 1889 the U.S. Commissioner of Education’s annual report recorded the number of students taking English in business schools and schools for the blind, deaf, and feeble-minded, but not in public or private secondary schools (Applebee 1974).

In addition to their supposed superiority in instilling mental discipline, Latin and Greek (as well as Hebrew) were valued in the classical college because of their relevance to the clergy, whose future members made up the majority of the students in the early American college. And, of course, familiarity with (if not mastery of) Latin and Greek was seen as a sign of refinement that identified one as a member of the upper class.

#### **ANGLO-SAXON**

While modern English could be dismissed as an uninflected language, Anglo-Saxon, like Greek and Latin was an inflected language. And therefore, argued those advocating the study of modern languages, Anglo-Saxon was equally able to impart mental discipline (Graff 1987; Kitzhaber 1953). What’s more, America’s post-revolutionary War big three in language studies—Franklin, Jefferson, and Webster—all supported the study of Anglo-Saxon based on John Horne Tooke’s claim in his popular *Diversions of Purley* (1784) that Anglo-Saxon was the core of the English language.<sup>1</sup> As

Webster (1789) noted in Dissertation I of his *Dissertations on the English Language*, “The primitive language of the English nation was the Saxon, and the words derived from that, now constitute the ground-work of modern English” (61). In Dissertation IV, Webster notes that “the discovery of the true theory of the construction of language, seems to have been reserved for Mr. Home Tooke, author of ‘Diversions of Purley’” (182).

Jefferson was especially intrigued by the Saxon roots of the English language. He published an *Essay on the Anglo-Saxon Language* and believed in the so-called “Saxon myth.” A popular belief of the time, the “Saxon myth” held that legal rights inherent in a democracy were based upon Anglo-Saxon laws. While feudalism had curtailed individual freedoms, the Magna Carta and the American Revolution had restored these basic Anglo-Saxon rights. Accordingly, Jefferson believed knowledge of Anglo-Saxon was necessary “for a complete understanding and appreciation of both the letter and spirit of the law” (Andresen 1990, 59). Thus, when he opened the University of Virginia, Jefferson saw to it that Anglo-Saxon was included in the Department of Modern Languages. In fact, he tried (and failed) to make it a national requirement for all undergraduates.

During the second half of the nineteenth century, the study of Anglo-Saxon began to take hold in American colleges. First taught at the University of Virginia in 1825, then taught at Amherst from 1838 through 1843, it was introduced to Harvard by Francis J. Child in 1851. But it was another Francis who would be the key figure in popularizing Anglo-Saxon: Francis A. March.

March's interest in Anglo-Saxon was sparked by an extra-curricular lecture given at Amherst by Webster while March was attending college there. He then went on to study with Webster's son-in-law William C. Fowler. Fowler's collection of Anglo-Saxon texts made such an impression on March that fifty years after leaving Amherst, he still recalled Fowler holding up the books in front of the class like "precious shells, or minerals" (qtd. in Franklin 1984, 361).

While reading for law after graduation, March supported himself by teaching Greek and Latin rhetoric at Leicester Academy. In "Recollections of Language Teaching," March (1893) observed that he first decided to try and teach "English like Latin or Greek" (xxi) while at Leicester. From Leicester March moved on to Lafayette College. Years later, March noted that he followed the same principle at Lafayette: "The Lafayette courses were established with the maxim that 'English should be studied like Greek'" (March 1894, 294). There, in 1855, he pioneered a program in which students could take "two terms of Anglo-Saxon and Modern English" provided they had "nearly finished their Latin, Greek, French, and German" (xx).

In 1856 March's title, Professor of Rhetoric and Evidences of Christianity, was changed to Adjunct Professor of Belles Lettres and English Literature. A year later it was changed again to Professor of English Language and Comparative Literature as March became America's first professor of the English language. G. Wilson McPhail,<sup>2</sup> the president of Lafayette, explained the significance of the title change to his board of trustees in his inaugural address:

Your attention is next particularly asked to the fact, that to Lafayette College belongs, as we believe, the honor of establishing for the first time in this

country at least, a *Professorship of the English Language*. There has been from early times much talk about the English Language, and the importance of studying it. In this country, it has lately been growing into a prominent branch of study in the common schools. By the influence of Mr. Jefferson, A Professorship of Anglo-Saxon was founded in 1825, in the University of Virginia, and its course of lectures are now well attended. But this is perhaps the first college in which a special Philological Professorship has been established for the study of English. (qtd. in Franklin 1984, 361-2)

March went on to write several influential textbooks on Anglo-Saxon and philology, and became a central figure in the rise of modern languages. His 1865 textbook *Method of Philological Study of the English Language* went through eleven printings and in 1868 was later appended to William C. Fowler's *English Grammar* and went through four more printings. McPhail described March's method to the trustees as follows:

The novelty and importance of this study will justify me here in going into a somewhat extended and disproportionate detail and defence of its merits. After some preparatory study of the Anglo-Saxon, an English classic, Milton, for example, takes his place for a term, beside Homer, or Shakespeare beside Euripidies. His text is minutely and laboriously analyzed; his idioms are explored: we look up his mythology, biography, history, geography, astronomy, metaphysics, theology; his allusions of all kinds. We try to apprehend the general plan, and comprehend the minor beauties of the

poem. . . . At the same time we make the text the foundation of more general philological study. “Gerund-grinding” and root-digging take their turn; and Webster’s Unabridged Dictionary claims the students midnight hours. (qtd. in Franklin 1984, 363)

McPhail’s description points out a number of ways in which the study of Anglo-Saxon advanced English studies. To begin with, it introduced the English language as an object of study. In addition, it put English literature on the same level as classical literature “Milton . . . beside Homer, or Shakespeare beside Euripidies.” And it demonstrated the rise of philological study in the academy, as well as the acceptance of an American dictionary as the authority in language matters.

In his Preface to *Method* (1865), March points out the vast domain of classical philology and notes the even broader domain of comparative philology used in *Method*:

Classical philology regards language mainly as literature, and studies grammar in connection with etymology, rhetoric, poetry, and criticism. A thorough method of philological study plainly has questions to ask of psychology, since the general laws of language are on one side also laws of mind; it includes the study of history and character of a race and their language, and of the nature in which they have lived, since from these result the peculiar laws and idioms of a language, and the power of special words and phrases over the national heart; it includes, the study of live and times, and of the character of the author, since his idiotisms are a resultant of the influences of the age and his own genius; it implies the study of many books in many languages, since it is only by a comparison of words of different

nations and ages that we can find out the peculiarities of each nation, age, and person, and trace the influences from which a great work has sprung, and the influences which it has exerted on other minds and on language. *The science of language (Comparative Philology) has a still wider range* [emphasis added]. (np)

Though March claims that “philology regards language mainly as literature,” an examination of *Method* finds that it focuses on the etymology, biography, history, and grammar of English literature while totally ignoring the larger meaning of the texts. A typical page from March’s textbook contains a line or two from classics such as *Pilgrim’s Progress, Paradise Lost, Julius Caesar, Faery Queen, or Canterbury Tales* followed by a host of single-spaced philological questions such as “What is the next clause? Is it subordinate or co-ordinate? Substantive, adjective, or adverbial? Completing or extending? An adjunct of place, time, cause, condition, or manner?” (March 1865, 10). In an ironic sense, March’s approach demonstrated that English could be just as arcane and boring as Latin or Greek. Still, by viewing literature as the source of the language to be studied philologically, March and other philologists indirectly made English literature a part of language study.

March also represented a new breed of American professor: the scholar. His 1870 publication of *A Comparative Grammar of the Anglo-Saxon Languages* was acknowledged as an important work in America and Germany. He also published frequently in scholarly journals and wrote articles on the value of teaching English in popular periodicals such as the *Nation*. He believed strongly in the professionalization of the discipline and served twice as President of the American Philological Association, in

1873 and 1895, and once as President of the Modern Language Association, in 1891. (Franklin 1984).

The study of Anglo-Saxon spread fairly quickly. An 1877 Board of Education survey found that twenty-three colleges offered courses in Anglo-Saxon, and another eight studied it in other courses in English literature. A dozen years later, the Commissioner of Education's *Report of 1888-9* listed forty-four out of the hundred-and-one colleges and universities as offering courses in Anglo-Saxon (Kitzhaber 1953).

Not only did the introduction of the study of Anglo-Saxon into the classical curriculum pave the way for both the study of English language and literature it also undermined the primary defense of the Yale Report: mental discipline. The authors of the Yale Report argued that classical languages should be taught because of their superior ability in providing mental discipline. By demonstrating that the study of modern languages could also provide mental discipline, advocates of modern language undermined the very rationale used by classicists to justify the study of Greek and Latin. In other words, if mental discipline was the object, then any subject that provided it was equally worthy of study.

#### **MODERN LANGUAGE SCHOLARSHIP 1828 - 1850**

As was noted in the last chapter, modern language scholarship in America took place outside the classical college prior to the Yale Report. Modern language study was the province of the gentleman scholar and was a pursuit followed, for the most part, in one's spare time. The French political view of language dominated American thought. And Indian Studies were the primary focus of American scholars such as Jefferson, Pickering, and Duponceau. All of that would change during the Yale Report Years



By the 1830s the French political view of language was beginning to be superseded by the German autonomous approach to language studies in America. The French approach originated in the eighteenth century and viewed language as a social product. The object of the *grammaire générale* was to reduce understanding to the least common denominator in order to discover what was universal. These lowest common denominators were seen as timeless. Andresen (1990) explains under this approach “each linguistic sign function[ed] as a ‘tile’ that represented some little piece of the society’s collective reality” (72). In essence, each linguistic sign represented a miniature social contract. By fitting all the pieces together, the puzzle of language studies could be completed. The French Ideologues took this idea a step further as they hoped to uncover the ideology of the mind that united all languages.

Nineteenth century German Romanticism was a direct response to the French Enlightenment and the French Revolution. Rather than focus on individual linguistic signs, the German approach focused on language as a whole, *ein organisches Ganze*. Here the goal was not to find the universal, but to explain the unique. The individual rather than society was the center of language studies. While the French “project for finding the plan of language” was “an essentially spatial, two-dimensional construct” (Andresen 1990, 73), the German approach added a temporal, or historical, dimension. The discovery of Grimm’s Law is a perfect example of the German approach as it attempts to explain linguistic change over time.

In the United States, language studies during the first four decades of the nineteenth century focused on expanding its domain spatially, i.e., geographically. As late as 1842 when he founded the American Oriental Society, Pickering was calling for

further geographic expansion of language studies. In his presidential address to the Society, Pickering stated:

It is . . . our intention to extend our inquiries beyond the Eastern Continent to the uncivilized nations, who inhabit the different groups of islands in the Indian and Pacific Oceans, from the eastern coast of Asia to the western coast of America; comprising that region of the globe which has been called Polynesia. (qtd. in Andresen 1990, 122).

However, while Pickering maintained a political conception of language studies, he also championed German methodology and kept up a correspondence with Humboldt and Bopp among other Germans. Upon their return from Göttingen, *die neuen Amerikaner* also promoted German learning and scholarship. Even with their return to Harvard, however, language scholarship was produced outside the classical college. It wasn't until the third quarter of the nineteenth century that a new generation of American language and literature scholars would return from their studies in Germany and become practicing scholars in the classical college.

During the second quarter of the nineteenth century, two important conceptual changes occurred that would impact language studies. The first altered the way scholars looked at time. The eighteenth century and early nineteenth accepted Biblical chronology, but in the nineteenth century Biblical chronology was challenged by geological discoveries in the 1830s and, later, by Darwin's evolutionary theory in 1859. In his *Principles of Geology* published in 1830 (the first two volumes) and 1833 (the third volume), the Englishman Charles Lyell attacked the Genesis-based chronology for establishing geological time (Silverstein 1971, xii). Lyell's theory of geological time was

called “uniformitarianism.” In 1841, Lyell came to America and gave the Lowell lectures in Boston. In attendance was Josiah Whitney, a noted American geologist. Josiah passed on Lyell’s theory of “uniformitarianism” to his younger brother William Dwight Whitney (Andresen 1990). The younger Whitney, who had taken an interest in Sanskritism and went on to study philology in Germany,<sup>3</sup> would become the most noted American philologist of the nineteenth century and introduced “uniformitarianism” to linguistics. Lyell’s concept of geological time together with the Darwinian concept of evolutionary time fundamentally changed the way scholars thought about history. As a result, the French atemporal approach lost even more ground to the German historical-comparative approach to language study.

Similarly, the middle of the nineteenth century also witnessed another important conceptual change, the division of philosophy and science. As Formigari (1999) observes, “In the history of linguistics, the *grammaire générale* is the last scientific programme to have been carried out within an epistemological framework which still considered philosophy and the sciences coextensive terms” (3). In 1840, the word “scientist” was coined in by William Whewell as an alternative to “philosopher” (Andresen 1990). The shift from philosophy to science also favored the German approach to language studies.

“In simplistic terms,” Andresen (1990) writes, “nineteenth century America may be seen as a battleground between French-style ethnolinguistics and German-style Indo-European studies” (75). However, “after mid-century, major shifts in discipline boundaries were underway, and the Germans were drawing all the lines” (133-4).

In particular, the German August Schleicher drew the line between scientific versus non-scientific language studies in 1850 in his *Die Sprachen europa in systematischer Uebersicht*. The key question for Schleicher was whether language studies was a physical science, a *Naturwissenschaft*, or a moral science, a *Geisteswissenschaft*. Schleicher's Solomonesque solution was to divide language studies in half. Since philology studied language as a means to examine the literature and culture of a people, it was concerned with those things subject to human will and was, therefore, a *Geisteswissenschaft*, or moral science. Linguistics, on the other hand, studied language *per se*, that is as a phenomenon apart from human will and thus qualified as a *Naturwissenschaft*, or natural science. Philology examined cultural history; linguistics natural history, i.e., science (Andresen 1990).

#### **THE GERMAN METHOD**

More important even than the rise of the German approach to language studies to the development of English studies in America was the adoption of the German method—philology. Even scholars who believed in a political approach to language study, such as Pickering and, later, Whitney, advocated the philological method.

Like Anglo-Saxon, philology began to take hold in American colleges during the 1850s. Kitzhaber (1953) notes that a number of reasons contributed to the adoption of philology during the second half of the nineteenth-century, including the impressive work done by German philologists such as Grimm, Bopp, Mätzer, and Heyne, the rise of science, the impact of evolutionary theory which resulted in a historical approach to language and literature study, and the simple fact that those advocating English studies saw philology as a way of cracking the monopoly enjoyed by the classical languages.

The Commissioner of Education's *Report for 1888-9* listed courses of study at a hundred-and-one colleges and universities. Of those, forty-four had a course that could be categorized as some type of "philology" (Kitzhaber 1953). Certainly, a large part of philology's success in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was due to its German origins. With the American college transforming itself into the American university based on the German model, philology had the perfect pedigree for success. In addition, the work of Grimm, Bopp, and others showed it produced results. And it is no coincidence that as the nineteenth century began its third quarter, William Dwight Whitney, Basil Gildersleeve, and Francis Child, the leaders of the next generation of American language and literature scholars, the first American generation of professional scholars, were all in Germany studying philology.

#### **WILLIAM DWIGHT WHITNEY**

William Dwight Whitney, "the foremost American philologist and linguistics scholar of the nineteenth century" (Kitzhaber 1953, 23), reflected elements of both the past and the future of American language studies. Like Jefferson, Pickering and Duponceau, Whitney's conception of language was political rather than the *Naturwissenschaft* view of the Germans. Unlike Jefferson, Pickering, and Duponceau, however, Whitney was professional scholar. He graduated from Williams College in 1845, studied Sanskrit in graduate school at Yale's new Department of Philosophy and the Arts, and went on to Germany where he studied under Weber, Bopp, Lepsius, and Roth from 1850 to 1853. In 1854 he was appointed chair of Sanskrit at Yale. Eventually, he was awarded an endowed chair, sponsored by his old professor Edward Salisbury.

For Whitney, language study could never be separated from human will and, thus, linguistics was not a *Naturwissenschaft*. He held a “common-sense” conception of linguistic science. In his 1875 article “Are Languages Institutions?” he described two competing views of language studies. The first view was founded on the “unlearned popular view of speech, that of the general body of cultivated people” (qtd. in Andresen 1990, 156). The second view, the German view espoused by Schleicher and later Friedrich Max Mueller, held an “admiring contemplation of language, in its comprehensive relation to the human mind and human progress, and toward its study in and through the processes of mental action that underlie its production and use” (qtd. in Andresen 1990, 156). Whitney claimed that first view is “truer, and, in the proper sense, more *philosophical* [emphasis added]” (qtd. in Andresen 1990, 156). Other American philologists such as Basil Gildersleeve disagreed and, ultimately, the German *Naturwissenschaft* view of language would prevail. Nevertheless, Whitney’s efforts to institutionalize philology along with his prodigious scholarship won him the title of America’s greatest nineteenth century philologist.

He joined the American Oriental Society in 1850 and eventually became its president. He was one of the founders and the first President of the American Philological Association in 1869. In addition, he was well known for his work with the Spelling Reform Association and for his editorship of the *Century Dictionary* (1889-91). Andresen (1990) writes that “almost single-handedly, Whitney institutionalized American language studies and gave language studies an organization that is still in place today” (135). Whitney’s correspondence, writes Silverstein (1971), indicates that Whitney’s advice was solicited for appointments in departments around the country.

His scholarship was equally impressive. Incredibly, he wrote more than half of the American Oriental Society's *Journal* from 1857 to 1885 (Andresen 1990). He collaborated with Rudolph von Roth on the *editio princeps* of Atharva-Veda Samhita (1855-56), his work on Indology. He published his *Sanskrit Grammar* (1879) and its supplement *The Roots, Verb-forms, and Primary Derivatives of the Sanskrit Language* (1885) as his primary work as a Sanskrit scholar. And he wrote *Language and the Study of Language* (1867) and *The Life and Growth of Language* (1875), among other works, on general linguistics. Upon his death, The First American Congress of Philology was dedicated to his memory (Nerlich 1990) and testimonials came in from around the world.

#### **TRENDS IN MODERN LANGUAGE STUDY 1850 - 1870**

##### **Specialization**

The third quarter of the nineteenth century saw the beginning of scholarly specialization. In an 1847 Phi Beta Kappa speech at Harvard, George Marsh, one of the pioneers of English studies in America, noted that a new era in scholarship had arrived, one that called for a new kind of scholar. Knowledge had expanded to the point, Marsh wrote, that

none can hope to possess it in its full extent. . . . He therefore who aspires to be initiated into the mysteries of science must elect his faculty, and choose ignorance of some things well worthy to be understood, to the end that he may the more perfectly know and appropriate those truths, for the investigation of which he has a special vocation. (qtd. in Franklin 1984, 358)

### Correctness

The period between 1851 and 1875 saw a revival of prescriptivism regarding language, which had lessened during the 30s and 40s. Drake (1977) writes that “[a]n examination of the second half of century reveals that the doctrine of correctness revived with new vehemence in a new drive for uniformity and conformity. Indeed, it became a *mania* for correctness” (18). The genteel culture of the time, promulgated by genteel magazines equated linguistic correctness with propriety and cultivation.

In addition to calling for greater specialization, George Marsh was an advocate of the study of English. In 1858-9 he delivered a series of postgraduate lectures at Columbia on the English language. Although the lectures themselves were a financial failure, they were eventually published and proved so popular (and profitable) that they went through twenty printings. Marsh’s lectures helped gain acceptance for English studies. One reviewer from the New York Times was so impressed by Marsh’s lectures that he wrote: “We shall be disappointed if these lectures do not prove the means of making a systematic study of the English language an essential part of the American Collegiate course hereafter (qtd. in Franklin 1984, 360). The lectures, observes Drake (1977), noted “a close connection between language and culture” (23). However, Marsh feared the connection was being threatened by the growing separation between the English of England and that of America. Therefore, he concluded his first lecture by warning America to study its language in order that the language and culture of the “anglican people” may be preserved. “Thus it is,” writes Drake (1977), “that Marsh reveals a basic anxiety, and thus it is, too, it may be added, that in Marsh, as in many of



his fellows, that persistent American strain of Puritanism joins the strain of the enlightenment and boundlessness in the development of correctness” (24).

What Drake (1977) terms “the *mania* for correctness” (18) that permeated the second half of the nineteenth century can also be seen in the Great Dictionary War that began in 1860. While Webster’s two-volume quarto “American Dictionary” of 1828 was a critical success; at \$20 a set, it was not a financial one. So a year later Webster hired Joseph E. Worcester to abridge the dictionary to one volume. The new dictionary sold well, and Worcester soon followed it up with a dictionary of his own (Mencken 1936). In 1860 Worcester brought out a quarto edition of his dictionary to compete with the Goodrich revision of the *New Webster*, igniting the Great Dictionary War. Drake (1977) writes that the appearance of *Worcester’s Dictionary* set off “a rivalry in which apparently nearly every literate person took sides” (19). It also sparked a series of lawsuits that took decades to resolve.

By 1860 dictionaries were big business as the dictionary had established itself as *the* authority on language. The fact that people were so engaged in the competition between the two dictionaries reflected the general public’s concern for linguistic correctness. The root of this concern was upward mobility. Immigration rates were high and linguistic correctness was viewed as a means for (1) acceptance into American society and (2) upward mobility.

The “*mania* for correctness” even sparked a revival of the “Americanism” debate. Like Latin and Greek, proper English had become a sign of distinction of the upper class. As a result, writes Drake (1977), “By 1875 the prescriptive doctrine was well

re-established in the minds of most educated, intelligent people as the appropriate attitude to take toward linguistic change, variation, or difference” (31).

## **LITERARY INROADS DURING THE YALE REPORT YEARS**

### **Literary Histories**

Despite the Yale Report, English literature managed to infiltrate the curriculum in various ways during the years between 1828 and 1870. During the late 1840s, English literary histories began to appear. Thomas Budge Shaw’s *Outlines of English History* was published in England in 1848 and it was reprinted in America in 1849. *Outlines* consisted of separate articles about each author and his major works that, as Kitzhaber (1953) observed, were “inaccurate and unscholarly, and never brought the student into contact with the actual works of literature” (39). That same year Charles D. Cleveland, a Philadelphia schoolmaster, published *A Compendium of English Literature, Chronically Arranged, from Sir John Mandeville to William Cowper*. Ten years later, he brought out a similar history of American literature. Cleveland’s texts resembled an encyclopedia and, unlike Shaw’s book, contained excerpts from the works of the author discussed. Such literary histories became quite popular in the 50s and 60s (Applebee 1974).

Cleveland’s *Compendium of English Literature* (1859) included suggested questions for examination. For example, he listed the following questions regarding Edmund Spenser:

Date of birth and death? In whose reign did he flourish? Repeat Thomson’s lines. What is said of his parentage? What does Gibbon say? How did he enter Cambridge? What is a “sizer,” and why so called? What work did he first publish? What is it? In what capacity did he go to Ireland? What grant

did he receive? Where did he go to reside? Who visited him there? What did he style him? What was he persuaded to do? What does Campbell say of Raleigh's visit to Spenser? What is Spenser's greatest work? Of how many books does it consist? How many is it said he intended to write? Did he probably finish his design? What happened to him in Ireland? Where did he die and when? (qtd. in Graff 1987, 39)

Applebee (1974) writes that by 1870 such questions were commonplace in courses on literature across the country.<sup>4</sup> Clearly, manuals such as Cleveland's had very little to do with literary appreciation or aesthetics. Instead, the focus, as indicated by the suggested questions for examination, was on historical facts and background. Brander Matthews, a student at Columbia during this time period, recalled having to memorize author's names, titles, dates of publication, and other minutiae while never being "introduced to the actual writings of any of the authors, nor was any hint dropped that we might possibly be benefited by reading them for ourselves" (qtd. in Graff 1987, 39).

### **Romanticism**

One of the hurdles faced by English literature advocates was the fear among conservative Christians that modern literature posed a threat to morality. The rise of Romanticism during the early nineteenth century helped overcome that fear by associating literature with culture. With the advent of industrialization and the rise of science and reason, society was undergoing tremendous changes. With religion increasingly coming under attack, Romanticism offered an alternative to religion as a means of transmitting cultural values. The Romantics championed imagination as a

means for humans to overcome their baser instincts and access their better selves. Thus, modern literature was transformed from moral threat to champion of morality.

### **Appreciation**

While the classical college purposefully ignored English literature in the curriculum, the study of English literature flourished as an extracurricular activity. The first debating club or literary society, as it was usually called, arose at Yale in 1753, and were soon followed by similar societies at Princeton and Harvard (Rudolph 1962). As Morison observed, literary passages from Pope, Shakespeare, and Addison's *Cato* were some of the most popular subjects for declamation for Harvard's Speaking Club (which would eventually evolve into the Hasty Pudding Club) (Morison 1936b).

The curriculum of the classical college, ostensibly aimed at disciplining and furnishing the mind, was in many ways anti-intellectual and much more concerned with developing character. As Dartmouth's President Nathan Lord observed in 1828, "The very cultivation of the mind has frequently a tendency to impair moral sensibilities" (qtd. in Rudolph 1962, 39). Lord's fear that intellectual development was at cross-purposes to religious piety was commonplace. However, the literary societies were strong proponents of reason, and cultivated intellectual life. While the classical college avoiding controversy in favor of religious dogma, literary societies debated issues such as slavery and religious heresy. They also brought in their own speakers, such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, who, although Williams College deemed him too subversive to invite to official college functions, gave lectures on three different occasions at the invitation of student organizations (Bledstein 1976).

## **ENGLISH LITERATURE CIRCA 1870**

Though the use and study of English in the classroom of the classical American college had made significant strides since the “English-Prohibited” days of Harvard’s founding, the regular study of the English literature had yet to secure a spot in the curriculum. Nevertheless, as Applebee (1974) writes,

by 1865 English studies had become a part of three major traditions. Though in each case the study of English was subordinate to other goals, there was for the first time the possibility that all of these traditions might be united within the teaching of a single subject. And this is in fact what happened in the following decades: English studies increasingly found ways to claim the intellectual strength of the classical tradition, the moral strength of the ethical tradition, and the utilitarian strength of the nonacademic tradition. (14)

## **ENGLISH STUDIES AT HARVARD (FRANCIS JAMES CHILD)**

Once again, it is instructive to conclude a chapter by examining English studies at Harvard during the relevant time period. As noted in the last chapter, Edward Channing served as Boylston Professor of Rhetoric from 1819 to 1851, his tenure beginning before the Yale Report and continuing through the first half of the Yale Report Years. However, in 1851, Channing was succeeded as Boylston Professor by Francis James Child.

The son of a Boston sailmaker, Child’s life was changed when his performance at the English high school attracted the attention of Epes Sargent Dixwell, the principal of the Latin high school. At the time, those who were not expected to go on to college attended the English high school. However, impressed by Child, Dixwell urged him to prepare for college and, apparently, lent him the money to attend Harvard.<sup>5</sup> Child studied

under George Ticknor and Channing and graduated in 1846. An outstanding student in every class, he was immediately offered an instructorship in mathematics upon his graduation. In 1848 at age twenty-three, he published his first scholarly edition, a collection of sixteenth-century plays (the first work of its kind in America) entitled *Four Old Plays*. By 1849 he had left mathematics to become a “Tutor in History and Political Economy, and Instructor in Elocution” (McMurtry 1985, 70).<sup>6</sup> And, perhaps in response to his publication of *Four Old Plays*, he was given a leave of absence to study abroad.

Naturally, Child went to Germany. At the University of Berlin, Child studied philology under Jacob Grimm. From there he moved on to the University of Göttingen. Though he decided not to take a degree and did not write a dissertation, he was awarded an honorary Ph.D. (1854) from the University of Göttingen after returning home. While he was in Germany, Edward Channing resigned and Child was made Boylston Professor in 1851.

Upon his return to Harvard, Child immediately set about inserting English studies into his teaching. He taught a voluntary course on Anglo-Saxon in 1851. And by 1854 he had added Anglo-Saxon as a language in the required sophomore rhetoric course. In addition, he assigned students in his senior course in rhetoric a weekly lecture on English language and literature. As Boylston Professor of Rhetoric, Child was required to correct more than a thousand student papers a year. Understandably, such a load wore on Child. Myers (1996) writes that Child advised junior colleagues, “Get out of this subject, young man, as quickly as you can” (41).

Child's edition of Spenser's poetry (1855) and his *English and Scottish Ballads* (1857-8), which he later rewrote as the definitive *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads* established his reputation as one of America's leading scholars. A meticulous scholar, Child's motto was "Do it so it shall never have to be done again" (qtd. in Franklin 1984, 366). Upon the opening of Johns Hopkins in 1876, President Gilman tried to hire him away from Harvard. Harvard's President Eliot persuaded him to stay on by releasing him from his rhetoric courses and the burden of grading undergraduate compositions and made him Harvard's first Professor of English. That same year Robert Grant, one of Child's students, earned the first American Ph.D. in English literature (Applebee 1974).

Though Child was not an active participant in the professionalization of the the discipline like March, his scholarly example influenced several generations of scholars in English. Franklin (1984) states simply, "Child showed that philological scholarship worked" and "proved to the academic community and the broader educated community that English studies could yield significant contributions to learning" (366).

Just as Channing's tenure as Boylston Professor exemplified the introduction of English in the classical college, Child's career reflected the changes that took place during the Yale Report Years that sowed the roots for modern English departments: the introduction of the English language as an object of study, the rise of philology, the increased specialization in the academy, the influence of German scholarship, the emphasis on correctness in writing (and speaking), and the emergence of the first professors of English.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

# THE TRANSFORMATION TO THE MODERN AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

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*To the men who experienced it, the time around 1870 seemed to mark 'almost the Anno Domini of educational history' in the United States. . . . the American university of 1900 was all but unrecognizable in comparison with the college of 1860.*

—Laurence Veysey

*Every truth was important, he was told, and the slightest contribution to knowledge a legacy of inestimable value, whatever its apparent insignificance; and besides, this was the way it was done in Germany. He soon learned that the appeal to Germany was considered final, and even made use of it himself when it came handy.*

—Grant Showerman

### THE AMERICAN COLLEGE IN THE YALE REPORT YEARS (1828 – 1870)

Despite the inroads made by subjects such as Anglo-Saxon and philology, the classical curriculum continued to dominate the American College during the Yale Report Years. Although students could take a few electives during their junior and senior years, there was little time or motive to do so. The chief method of instruction remained recitation. And the dominant theory underlying pedagogy remained mental discipline.

Most colleges were associated with a religious sect. The faculty was drawn primarily from the clergy and the student body typically upper class, white, and male. Not surprisingly then, college liberal studies aimed to produce the Christian gentleman. As Carl Becker observed, “the end desired . . . was the disciplined and informed mind; but a mind disciplined to conformity and informed with nothing that a patriotic, Christian, and clubbable gentleman had better not know” (qtd. in Graff 1987, 20-21). College was for the sons of the upper class who, it was assumed, would naturally become



the leaders of society. As Veysey (1965) writes, college was a “means of confirming one’s respectable place in society” (4). It was not vocational, with the exceptions of the ministry and the law, and even that was largely pre-professional rather than vocational training.

Colleges were patriarchal institutions run by the college president who, like the faculty, was more often than not recruited from the clergy and taught seniors their capstone course in moral philosophy. As a result, the moral philosophy course was actually a course in Christian dogma that attempted to reconcile reason and natural law with Christianity (Rudolph 1962). Imported from England, the college experience called for a rural setting, dormitories, common dining halls, and worship services. Accordingly, the college was “a large family, sleeping, eating, studying, and worshipping together under one roof” (qtd. in Rudolph 1962, 88).

Many educators believed the social bonds that arose between classmates were more important than any particular study itself. Yale’s president Noah Porter (1870) wrote of the “sacred import of the words ‘class’ and ‘classmate’” (181). The premium associated with the common college experience is one of the reasons why Porter and other conservative educational leaders resisted an elective curriculum that they believed would inevitably diminish the bond between students.

Historians agree that little changed over the next forty years. Kitzhaber (1953) writes that “[u]ntil about 1870 few shifts in emphasis were apparent, the colleges continuing to operate much as they had since the eighteenth century” (1). Veysey (1965) states that “[t]o the men who experienced it, the time around 1870 seemed to mark ‘almost the Anno Domini of educational history’ in the United States,” and goes on to

observe that “the American university of 1900 was all but unrecognizable in comparison with the college of 1860” (1, 2).

Rudolph (1962) agrees, noting that efforts at reform were frustrated until the 1860s, when “[i]n a world remade by the Civil War the American college found that it could not avoid the questions that it had for so long evaded” (243). Instead, these would be “the decades when American educators, benefactors, and governments repudiated the Yale Report of 1828” (243-44). Although the reform efforts of the 1820s and 1850s were not able to overcome the combined inertia of the Yale Report and the classical curriculum, the forces that would transform the classical college into the modern university and bring about the fall of the classical languages and the rise of English were growing stronger.

#### **A CALL FOR UTILITY**

By the middle of the nineteenth century the American college was clearly in trouble (Veysey 1965; Rudolph 1961). In 1842 Francis Wayland, President of Brown, voiced his concerns in *Thoughts on the Present Collegiate System in the United States*: “I rather fear that the impression is gaining ground that this preparation [college] is not essential to success in professional study. A large proportion of our medical students are not graduates. The proportion of law students of the same class is, I think, increasing” (153). Meanwhile, those who wished to go into business or farming or any field other than the professions had no reason to attend. By restricting higher education to the professions, Wayland argued,

a very large class of our people have been deprived of all participation in the benefits of a higher education. It has been almost impossible in this country,

for the merchant, the mechanic, the manufacturer, to educate his son, beyond the course of a common academy unless he gave him the education preparatory for a profession. This was not the education he wanted, and of course, his son has been deprived of the cultivation which the parent was able and willing to bestow. Now the class of society that is thus left unprovided for, constitutes the bone and sinew, the very choicest portion of this or any community. They are the great agents of a production, they are the safest depositories of political power. It is their will, that, in the end, sways the destinies of nations. (154)

Why, Wayland asked, should a good education make a student fit only for the law, or medicine, or the pulpit? Why not develop disciplinary training for all occupations?

In addition to calling for a more practical education, Wayland believed the present curriculum was becoming too crowded. As a result, education was too superficial as more and more courses were packed into the same four-year program with less time devoted to each. To fix this he proposed three alternatives:

- 1) Cover fewer subjects but in more depth. “[I]nstead of learning *many* things *imperfectly*, we should learn a *smaller* number of things *well*.”
- 2) Keep the same number of subjects, but extend the time required for the degree.
- 3) “[M]ake a College more nearly resemble a real University; that is, make it a place of education in all the most important branches of human learning” (108-110).

However, Wayland's was but a voice in the wilderness and little change occurred.

Seven years later, frustrated by his lack of progress with the Brown board, Wayland resigned his presidency. Pressed to reconsider his resignation with the promise of greater cooperation from the corporation, Wayland prepared his now famous *Report to the Corporation of Brown University on Changes in the System of Collegiate Education*, Read March 18, 1850.

### **THE WAYLAND REPORT**

Just as the Yale Report was seized upon by defenders of the old college system, the Wayland Report provided ammunition for the reformers. In it, he reiterated his earlier call for a more practical course of study. The curriculum, he wrote, should be adapted to the wants of the community "not for the benefit of one class, but for the benefit of all classes" (Wayland 1850). He went on to call for a more utilitarian approach to education:

If every man who is willing to pay for them, has an equal right to the benefits of education, every man has a special right to that kind of education which will be of the greatest value to him in the prosecution of useful industry. It is therefore eminently unjust, practically to exclude the largest classes of the community from an opportunity of acquiring the knowledge, the possession of which is of inestimable importance, both to national progress and individual success. And yet we have in this country, one hundred and twenty colleges, forty-two theological seminaries, and forty-seven law schools, and we have not a single institution designed to furnish the agriculturist, the manufacturer, the mechanic, or the merchant with the

education that will prepare him for the profession to which his life will be devoted. (482)

Besides revising the curriculum, Wayland (1850) also suggested an elective system of sorts. “The various courses should be arranged, that, I so far as it is practicable, every student might study what he chose, all that he chose and nothing but he chose” (479).<sup>1</sup> He even challenged the sacrosanct place of Latin and Greek. If Latin and Greek cannot stand on their own merits, he argued, they do not deserve a place in the university. Besides, he asked, how many students read Latin or Greek once they leave the university.

As promised, the Brown Corporation put into effect a number of his proposals including a Ph.B. degree (similar to a B.S.) for three years’ work in the practical subjects. Unfortunately, enrollment did not increase enough to support the changes and the faculty had a hard time adjusting to the new curriculum. By 1856 the experiment was over and Wayland was replaced as president. His replacement Barnas Sears made clear his intention to return to the old ways, focusing on educating a narrow elite: “We are in danger of becoming an institution rather for conferring degrees upon the unfortunate than for educating a sterling class of men” (qtd. in Rudolph 1962, 240). And so, for the time being, reform was once again rebuffed.

## **THE GERMAN UNIVERSITY – PART TWO**

In 1851 Henry Phillip Tappan wrote that while he agreed with Wayland that education had become too superficial, he did not think we should fit colleges to “the temper of the multitude” (qtd. in Hofstader and Smith 1961, 491). Instead, he argued, we should build universities and reform our educational system from the top down: “The

philosophic idea of education being thus developed in the highest form of an educational institution—where alone it can be adequately developed—it will begin to exert its power over all subordinate institutions” (493).

In 1852 Tappan assumed the presidency of the University of Michigan and attempted to transform it along the lines of the German university.<sup>2</sup> He noted that America had no true university where students would have the resources for advanced study. Like Wayland, he believed that by adding courses to the old liberal arts curriculum, undergraduate education had become superficial. At the University of Michigan he proposed that students be allowed to continue their studies for advanced degrees and be free to choose their subjects of study. In 1857 the Board of Regents inaugurated a graduate degree program for a M.A. or M.S. requiring a minimum of a year’s study including at least two courses per semester, with examinations in three of the four courses, and a thesis on one of the subjects chosen for examination (Storr 1953).

The new graduate degree program attracted few students, however, and must be considered a near-failure at best. Meanwhile, what critics perceived as Tappan’s Germanic pretensions—such as drinking wine with his meals—along with his championing of nonsectarianism, and his advocacy of philosophical as opposed to practical education resulted in his replacement by a docile clergyman in 1863 (Rudolph 1962; Veysey 1965). Once again, reform was defeated and the college reverted to the stale leadership and methods of the past. Still, Tappan influenced a generation of young scholars at Michigan, including Andrew D. White who would later become President of Cornell University. And in this sense, at least, the seeds of the modern research university had been planted.

## **FORCES FOR CHANGE**

Despite over fifty years of calls for reform, the classical American college of 1870 was still essentially the colonial/classical college of two-hundred-and-thirty years earlier. During the next thirty years, however, the American college would be transformed into a university that Harvard's founders would not have recognized. Despite the failures of Wayland, Tappan, and others at reform, it was becoming more and more evident that the traditional liberal arts college was in trouble. America was changing and the American college would have to change too or face the prospect of becoming superfluous. The underlying forces for reform were too numerous—the desire for a more practical education, egalitarianism, the industrial revolution, the rise of science and technology, new pedagogies, the decline of religion, the influence of the German university, declining enrollment as a percentage of population, the Morrill Act, the fall of mental discipline, society's shift from agriculture and the farm to industry and the city, the rise of professionalism, and the rise to power of a new generation of academic men—and too powerful to be resisted for long.

## **THE DECLINING INFLUENCE OF RELIGION**

Religion and class were the dominant influences of the classical American college. From the outset, one of the primary functions of the classical college had been to prepare the clergy. The great religious revival of the early nineteenth century spawned an explosion in the number of sectarian colleges. From 1800 to 1831, Protestants founded 17 denominational colleges; from 1831 to 1861, 133 colleges were founded, virtually all sectarian. The faculty as well as the President of the college was usually drawn from the clergy (Kitzhaber 1953). And compulsory prayers and church services were standard.

As Veysey (1965) notes, in the classical American college, “educational and theological orthodoxy almost always went together. . . . Sometimes Christianity of this sort was passionately evangelical; sometimes it was tacitly complacent. But everywhere it gave college leaders their fundamental notion of the nature of the universe” (25). However, with the rise of skepticism, reason, and science, religion’s influence began to wane during the second half of the nineteenth century. While the common sense philosophers were employed to combat the threats of skepticism and reason, defenders of orthodoxy were, for the first time, on the defensive (Kitzhaber 1953). Orthodox educators who had muffled science under the classification of natural philosophy were unable to ignore the scientific revolution.

Even a staunch conservative such as Princeton’s McCosh admitted, “We can not keep our students from reading the works of such men as Herbert Spencer[,] Darwin[,] Huxley and Tyndall” (qtd. in Veysey 1965, 50). Still, orthodox educators did what they could to lessen the impact of science. McCosh, for instance, required students who took a science course to take a counterbalancing course in philosophy as well. In his inaugural speech at Yale in 1871, Porter took a similar balancing act approach. On the one hand, he argued for free inquiry, noting that educators must “look hopefully and eagerly forward, to greet every new discovery, to welcome every new truth, and to add to past contributions by new experiments, invention, and thought”; while on the other hand, he proclaimed that “[w]e desire more instead of less Christianity at this university” (qtd. in Veysey 1965, 45).

At many schools, religious orthodoxy was a requirement for hiring professors. In the 1850s the Methodists seized control of Ohio University from the Presbyterians.



Within three years every faculty member was Methodist (Rudolph 1962). At Princeton, McCosh quizzed prospective faculty on their religious beliefs. In a letter aimed at recruiting a young Princeton alumnus who was studying in Germany to teach at Princeton, McCosh wrote:

You are aware that the Trustees and all your friends here are resolute in keeping the College a religious one. You have passed through varied scenes since you left us. . . . If a man has the root in him he will only be strengthened in the faith by such an experience. It will be profitable to me to find how you have stood all this[.] (qtd. in Veysey 1965, 48)

Meanwhile, others were speaking out against clerical influence. At an address to the National Education Association in 1874, Andrew D. White put the primary blame for the fact that none of the 360 institutions of higher learning in America was on par with an average European university on religious domination of American colleges. White decried what were, in effect, religious tests to determine professorships, declaring that since Cotton Mather forced Henry Dunster's resignation from Harvard due to his nonconforming religious views "the sectarian spirit has been the worst foe of advanced education" (qtd. in Kitzhaber 1953, 7).

While the action taken at Ohio University in the 1850s was an extreme example, religious qualifications for faculty members were commonplace through the 1870s and 80s (Veysey 1965). However, by 1870, as Kitzhaber (1953) observes, denominational colleges found themselves on the defensive regarding a number of new trends in higher education, including coeducation, laboratory science courses, and higher standards of

scholarship. Thomas LeDuc aptly summarized the situation facing denominational colleges such as Amherst:

Amherst was founded squarely on the belief that the role of the college was to transfer to each new generation a body of accepted truth. The validity of these doctrines was not to be questioned. The German [research] ideal played havoc with this tradition. It suggested, in the first place, that truth was, perhaps, not yet entire. In the second place, it cut even more sharply into the old faith, for it declared a new the validity of human reason, of man's power to discern for himself, without divine revelation or intuitive perception, the nature and content of truth. (qtd. in Kitzhaber 1953, 8)

The shift away from religion could be seen in the changing vocational orientation of students as well. According to the Commissioner on Education's *Report for 1880*, in 1871 there were 94 theological schools with a total enrollment of 3,204; 60 business and commercial colleges with a total enrollment of 6,460; and 41 science schools with an enrollment of 3,304. Just nine years later in 1880, there were 142 theological schools with an enrollment of 5,242; 162 business and commercial colleges with an enrollment of 27,146; and 83 science schools with an enrollment of 11,584. While the number of theology schools and students increased, the increases paled in comparison to the increases in business and science institutions and students. Similarly, between 1885 and 1895 enrollment at 8 state universities increased 300 percent while enrollment at 8 well-known denominational colleges in the same area increased but 15%. By the end of the century, the advent of the large state universities inspired by the Morrill Act and

research-oriented, privately funded institutions such as Cornell, Chicago, and Johns Hopkins, effectively ended sectarian domination of higher education (Kitzhaber 1953).

### **THE RISE OF SCIENCE**

With the modern age and its new epistemology came the rise of science. Though most American colleges through the early nineteenth century believed science and applied technology were not considered proper subjects for college education, there were two noted exceptions—the United States Military Academy at West Point and the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. Established by Congress, the Military Academy was the first technical institute in the U.S. It soon became home to the “richest collection of technical books in the United States” (qtd. in Veysey 1965, 228). Cadets applied scientific methods to military problems and the curriculum included advanced math, chemistry, drawing, French, and civil engineering.

The Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute was founded in 1824 by Stephen Rensselaer to instruct teachers in applied science who could then go out into the schools and teach “the sons and daughters of farmers and mechanics . . . in the application of experimental chemistry, philosophy, and natural history, to agriculture, domestic economy, the arts, and manufactures” (qtd. in Veysey 1965, 230). Under the leadership of Amos Eaton, the Institute introduced the first chemistry and physics labs, the first engineering curriculum, and field trips to sites such as a bleaching factory to see scientific principles in action. By 1850 courses in natural science and civil engineering were added.

By mid-century, science was making inroads in classical American colleges such as Harvard and Yale as well. In 1847 Abbott Lawrence contributed \$50,000 to Harvard for a graduate engineering school. However, Louis Agassiz, who was elected Professor

of Zoölogy and Geology upon arriving from Europe that same year, transformed the Lawrence Scientific School into a stronghold of natural sciences (Morison 1936c). Also in 1847, Benjamin Silliman, Jr. and John P. Norton developed a School of Applied Chemistry at Yale. Civil engineering was added in 1852. And in 1854 the department housing both applied chemistry and civil engineering was reorganized into the Yale Scientific School. With a \$100,000 donation by Joseph Sheffield in 1860, it became the Sheffield Scientific School (Rudolph 1962).

Harvard offered its science students a Bachelor of Science in 1851, while Yale created the Bachelor of Philosophy in 1852. It is important to note that both degrees were seen as something less than the traditional B.A. degree and admission requirements to both programs were less stringent than for the B.A. degree. Still, the movement toward scientific study was growing.

Nine other colleges added some sort of scientific school in the 1850s and at least twenty-five more were established during the 1860s. And, of course, in 1859 Charles Darwin published *Origin of the Species*. Perhaps, one indication of the rise of science at Harvard is that Darwin sent one of the three advance copies of his landmark book to Harvard's Professor of Natural History Asa Gray.

#### **THE FALL OF MENTAL DISCIPLINE**

The authors of the Yale Report and other nineteenth century defenders of the classical American college inevitably called upon the theory of mental discipline to justify the classical curriculum. According to the theory of mental discipline, the human mind contained a number of faculties, such as will, understanding, emotions, and imagination. These mental and moral faculties are innate yet inchoate and will not fully

develop without proper training; hence, the need for higher education to strengthen and develop these faculties via exercise and drill. In his inaugural address at Princeton in 1868, McCosh neatly tied the role of higher education in mental discipline to Christian dogma:

I do hold it to be the highest end of a University to educate; that is, to draw out and improve the faculties which God has given. Our Creator, no doubt, means all things in our world to be perfect in the end; but he has not made them perfect; he has left room for growth and progress; and it is a task laid on his intelligent creatures to be fellow-workers with him in finishing the work which he has left incomplete. (qtd. in Veysey 1965, 23)

This mental discipline ideal, writes Kitzhaber (1953), ruled higher education until the 1870s. Accordingly, educators in the classical college saw their role as twofold: (1) to discipline and develop a student's mental faculties or powers through drill and exercise, and (2) to teach the student generalized principles which could be applied later in professional life.

The mental discipline ideal and common sense philosophy were the last line of defense for the classical college and religion's dominating influence on higher education. Both the mental discipline ideal and common sense philosophy rested upon a faculty psychology foundation. By declaring common sense a mental faculty, Scottish philosophers defused the threats of skepticism and rationalism and thereby cleared the way for a moral philosophy based upon orthodox Christianity (Kitzhaber 1953).

However, by 1850 the Maginot line of faculty psychology was beginning to come under fire. Sir William Hamilton's psychological theories complicated the oversimplified view of mental powers described by Reid and others. Though he was primarily an associationist, Hamilton still adhered to the notion of mental powers. However, another associationist, the Scot Alexander Bain, professor of logic, mental philosophy, and English literature at the University of Aberdeen attacked the notion of separate mental faculties. Unlike his predecessors, Bain realized the necessity of incorporating physiology into any explanation of how we think. His two major books on the subject *The Senses and the Intellect* (1855) and *The Emotions and the Will* (1859) provided the most comprehensive discussion of psychology to date and became textbook staples in America until the end of the century (Kitzhaber 1953).

Darwinism's focus on individual differences also conflicted with a faculty psychology approach to education. But it was the rise of experimental science that ultimately doomed faculty psychology. Germany's Wilhelm Wundt, the father of experimental psychology, began to study mental phenomena in terms of stimulus and response. He published the landmark *Principles of Physiological Psychology* in 1873-74 and established his famous experimental laboratory in 1879. Wundt's work attracted students from Europe and America. Among those who studied under Wundt was G. Stanley Hall, who not only set up America's first laboratory at Johns Hopkins University in 1883 but also focused research on child psychology. One of his Hall's first students was John Dewey who published his *Psychology* in 1886 and led the movement for progressive education. Meanwhile, at Harvard in the 1870s, William James began publishing articles on psychology and in 1890 he published his famous *Principles of*

*Psychology.* In addition, the influence of Johann Friedrich Hebart's theory of apperception reached America around 1885. According to the theory of apperception, a student learns best by being guided from familiar material to related unfamiliar material. Thus, by 1890, writes Kitzhaber (1953), faculty psychology had pretty much been discredited.

Whatever credence remained was shattered with the publication of the three-part paper "The Influence of Improvement in One Mental Function upon the Efficiency of Other Functions," by E. L. Thorndike and R. S. Woodworth in *Psychological Review* in 1901. In their study, Thorndike and Woodworth examined the effectiveness training their subjects in one function had in the efficiency in another function. In essence, they were testing the underlying theory of mental discipline. They concluded that

The training might give some mysterious discipline to mental powers which we could not analyze but could only speak of vaguely as training of discrimination or attention. If present, such an effect should be widely and rather evenly present, since the training in every case followed the same plan. *It was not* [emphasis added].

For functions so similar and for cases so favorable for getting better standards and better habits of judging the amount of improvement gotten by training in an allied function is small. *Studies of the influence of the training of similar functions in school and in the ordinary course of life, so far as we have made such, show a similar failure to bring large increases of efficiency in allied functions* [emphasis added]. (395)

And with that, the mental discipline ideal was thoroughly discredited.

### **THE MORRILL FEDERAL LAND GRANT ACT**

For nearly half a century there had been various efforts in the way of agricultural education. By 1850 it was apparent that a new sort of technical training was needed for American farmers and mechanics. Congressman Justin Smith Morrill of Vermont had long been in favor of cutting away part of the classical curriculum for a more practical education and in 1857 he introduced a bill whose purpose was “to promote the liberal and practical education of the industrial classes in the several pursuits and professions of life” (qtd. in Rudolph 249). His original bill was defeated, but in 1862 after the South had seceded from the Union and Lincoln had succeeded Buchanan as President, Morrill resubmitted the bill and it was made law.

The Morrill Act (1862) provided support for a minimum of one college per state “where the leading object shall be, without excluding other scientific or classical studies, to teach such branches of learning as are related to agriculture and the mechanic arts” (Hofstader and Smith 1961, 568-9). Each state was received public lands or land script equal to 30,000 acres per senator and representative according to the 1860 apportionment. The proceeds of the sale went into a state fund. Ten percent of the fund could be used for purchasing a college site or experimental farm, with the remainder maintained as a perpetual endowment.

At the time, few foresaw the impact the Morrill Act would have on American higher education. Initially, there was some question as to whether the new land grant colleges would turn out graduates with practical training. However, the act included no real supervision and different institutions interpreted their charge differently. In any case, farmers were initially skeptical about an agricultural education and were loath to send



their children to the new institutions. And for good reason, as the first professors of agriculture typically were natural scientists with no practical experience. In addition, the new colleges were seen as a contributing factor as more and more farm children were leaving the farm to go to the city. American society was rapidly changing from an agrarian one to an urbanized, industrial society and there would no reversing the trend of leaving the farm. Ultimately, the gains made by scientific agriculture in crop yields and the establishment of experimental stations as a result of the Hatch Act of 1887 won farm support for the new colleges (Veysey 1965).

In 1890 the Morrill Act endowment was strengthened by the second Morrill Act, which provided federal appropriations for land grant colleges as well as stimulating state legislatures to provide support as well. Ironically, leaders of the old time colleges such as Presidents Eliot of Harvard and McCosh of Princeton, which had received their own state aid early on, strongly opposed the Morrill Act and its federal aid to new colleges. Nevertheless, the Morrill Act would become one of the most influential pieces of legislation in U.S. history and by 1961 sixty-nine colleges, at least one in every state, were supported by the Morrill Act (Rudolph 1962).

### **CORNELL UNIVERSITY**

The founding of Cornell University marked the dawn of a new era in American higher education. Not only was it the first land grant institution established from funds under the Morrill Act but also the first major university, excepting a few tentative experiments, founded upon the utility principle. Funded with \$600,000 in Morrill funds and \$500,000 from a private donation by Ezra Cornell, the largest stockholder of Western

Union, Cornell University was formed as a result of lobbying by Andrew White in the New York Senate for a new university.

White, a Yale graduate who had taught history at the University of Michigan under Henry Tappan, was the youngest member of the New York Senate in 1864 and chair of the committee on education. It was in the Senate that White met Ezra Cornell, a self-made millionaire who was chair of the agricultural committee. Originally, several members of the Senate wanted to divide the Morrill funds among more than twenty New York colleges. White argued successfully against dividing the funds, noting that the resources for a University should be concentrated rather than diffused. When Mr. Cornell later made a proposal to divide the \$600,000 in Morrill funds between the “People’s College” at Havana and the State Agricultural College at Ovid, and to donate an additional \$300,000 to the State Agricultural College to make the proceeds there equal the entire Morrill grant, White said he would bring a bill to give the entire grant to a new institution provided Mr. Cornell would make the same offer. Eventually, Mr. Cornell agreed to give \$500,000 for a new university at Ithaca. And so in 1865 the New York legislature chartered Cornell University. Not surprisingly, Mr. Cornell chose White to be the university’s first President.

The new university broke from the tradition of the American college in many ways. First of all, it was open to all people—not just the well-off, not just men, and not just whites. Secondly, it offered an elective rather than prescriptive curriculum. As Ezra Cornell put it, “I would found an institution where any person can find instruction in any study” (qtd. in Rudolph 1962, 266). Hyperbole aside, Cornell would provide far more choices than the traditional college. While Mr. Cornell had originally conceived of the

university in vocational terms as a sort of glorified trade school, White added the spirit of scholarship to the mix. As a result, Cornell University incorporated both the vocational ideal of the utility movement and the scholarship ideal of the German university. And thirdly, Cornell University was nonsectarian. White, who had defended Darwinism against religious attacks, firmly believed sectarian interests should not be allowed to restrain the university.

At Cornell's Inaugural, President White read through the school's statement of principles which held that practical and liberal learning would be united, control would nonsectarian, and that all courses of study would be equal, including scientific studies. Only the final principle he listed, that individuals would be developed to the fullest and prepared for useful roles in society, would have been approved in the traditional American college.

The influence of Tappan's University of Michigan was clear. However, unlike Michigan, Cornell was an instant success. Despite attacks from religious leaders claiming Cornell was a bastion of atheism, the changes at Cornell proved popular with the public. The third freshman class in 1871 was over 250 students and set a record as the largest freshman class in American history (Rudolph 1962). This time the seeds of reform had taken root.

### **REFORMING HARVARD**

In 1869 Harvard College stood at a turning point. Yale had surpassed Harvard with both a superior graduate school and better scientific instruction. Cornell's reforms were proving popular with the public, and Johns Hopkins would soon be established as the premier graduate institution in the country. Meanwhile, Harvard's Medical and Law

School were in horrendous states, and the Lawrence Scientific School was seen as a “resort for shirks and stragglers” (qtd. in Morison 1936c, 324). Relative college enrollment in New England was lower in 1869 than 1838: .051 percent of the population versus .075 per cent. In short, Harvard stood in real danger of losing its long held leadership status.

Fortunately for Harvard, a new President would emerge who would not only reform Harvard and lead it back to its position of preeminence but also become a national leader in higher education. Merely thirty-five years old when he assumed the Presidency, Charles William Eliot would go on to lead the institution for forty years. However, his nomination was originally rejected by the Board of Overseers.

Eliot had graduated from Harvard in 1853 and been an assistant professor of mathematics and chemistry at the Lawrence Scientific School. Morrison (1936c) notes that while Eliot was an unpopular yet conscientious teacher and showed no particular promise as a scholar, his administrative skills had brought him to the attention of the President and Governing Boards. However, after he was beaten out for the Rumsford Professorship in 1863, Eliot left Harvard.

He spent the next two years abroad studying European educational systems and methods. Upon his return, he was offered a chair of Chemistry at MIT. And at Commencement in 1868, he was elected an Overseer of Harvard College. The next few months would prove momentous for young Mr. Eliot. In September of 1868, President Hill resigned. In early 1869 Eliot published two articles in the *Atlantic Monthly* on what he called “The New Education,” calling for reform. And on March 12th, the Corporation nominated him for President of Harvard. The Board of Overseers, however, rejected his

nomination on April 21. Nevertheless, the Corporation refused to give in and returned his nomination unanimously to the Board. This time around Eliot supporters had their way and on May nineteenth, he was elected President of Harvard (Morison 1936c).

In the opening lines of his inaugural address, Eliot left no doubt that Harvard would no longer adhere to the strict classical liberal arts education:

The endless controversies whether language, philosophy, mathematics, or science supplies the best mental training, whether general education should be chiefly literary or scientific, have no practical lesson for us to-day. This University recognizes no real antagonism between literature and science, and consents to no such narrow alternatives as mathematics or classics, science or metaphysics. We would have them all, and at their best. (Eliot 1869, 1)

Within three years Eliot had reformed both the Law and Medical Schools and added a new School to study the laboratory science of bacteriology. Christopher Langdell, hired by Eliot and voted Dean of the Law School, established written examinations, a progressive three-year curriculum, and what would become known as the case law method.

The Medical School Eliot inherited was particularly shoddy. Students merely had to attend lectures and clinical demonstrations for a minimum of sixteen weeks, though they wouldn't receive a degree for three years. They took but one oral examination in which each candidate was questioned by nine professors for ten minutes and only had to pass five of the nine oral exams. Bad as its instruction was, Morison (1936c) observes, it was no worse than any other medical school. Once again, Eliot intervened, establishing a progressive three-year curriculum, written examinations, and entrance requirements. He

was fought every step of the way by senior faculty. Finally, after three inconclusive meetings, the Board of Overseers approved Eliot's reforms upon hearing the Board President Charles Francis Adams relate how a recent graduate had killed three successive patients by overdosing them with sulphate of morphia.

Eliot also reformed the graduate school. Although the Lawrence Scientific School had offered advanced instruction for twenty years, no advanced degree was given. The M.A. degree at Harvard, on the other hand, was said to be awarded for merely "keeping out of jail five years and paying five dollars" (Morison 1936c, 334). The new Graduate Department (later renamed the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences) required a year's postgraduate work and the passing of an exam for a M.A., while the Ph.D. required further examination along with a dissertation which provided "a contribution to knowledge" (335). Once again, Eliot's reforms met with resistance from the faculty. When some suggested a graduate school would only weaken the college, Eliot replied, "As long as our teachers regard their work as simply giving so many courses for undergraduates, we shall never have first-class teaching here. If they have to teach graduate students as well as undergraduates, they will regard their subjects as infinite, and keep up that constant investigation which is necessary for first class teaching" (335-6).

#### **ELIOT AND THE ELECTIVE SYSTEM AT HARVARD**

However, the reform Eliot is most noted for, and justly so, is the promotion of the elective system. A Jeffersonian democrat who firmly believed in individual liberty coupled with self-discipline, Eliot believed undergraduates should be allowed to choose the courses they wished to fulfill their bachelor's degree. This was heresy according to

the old liberal arts tradition that sought to furnish the mind with a standard set of knowledge. Despite vociferous opposition, Eliot persisted in promoting an elective curriculum.

Hawkins (1972) speculates that Eliot's personal experiences as a Harvard undergraduate along with those of his son undoubtedly influenced his view of the elective curriculum. Eliot's ideal vision of education, writes Hawkins, drew upon his own days as an undergraduate "working enthusiastically and of his own free choice in Professor Cooke's chemistry laboratory" (106). Eliot's son and namesake Charles had a similar experience as a Harvard undergraduate. Hawkins writes that young Charles found the required freshman curriculum of 1878 "uncongenial." At the end of the year having concluded his required courses, Charles celebrated "a thanksgiving that his 'classical education' was at last ended" (94). Though young Charles was undecided in his choice of future profession, the electives he selected were, in Hawkins' words, "remarkably appropriate to his later needs as a landscape architect" (94). In any case, Eliot became the leading proponent of the elective system.

In his inaugural address, Eliot (1869) attacked the old notion of faculty psychology head-on: "In education the individual traits of different minds have not been sufficiently attended to." Moreover, he continued, "the young man of nineteen or twenty ought to know what he likes best and is most fit for. . . . When the revelation of his own peculiar tastes and capacity comes to a young man, let him reverently give it welcome, thank God, and take courage. Thereafter, he knows his way to a happy, enthusiastic work, and, God willing, to usefulness and success" (12).

Like his opponents, Eliot invoked mental discipline to justify his position. On the one hand, he argued that students should be free to develop the mental faculty they were most gifted with; and on the other hand, he championed liberal studies for providing a generalized mental discipline, never noting the inherent contradiction in his position (Hawkins 1972).

Eliot also knew that in order to broaden the curriculum and bring the natural and physical sciences into equality with the traditional subjects, he needed a means to expand the faculty. By offering the student freedom of choice, new subjects were given an equal footing with the traditional ones and new faculty could be brought in to teach these new courses. In this regard, the elective system proved an unqualified success. As Rudolph (1962) notes, during the forty years of Eliot's administration the faculty grew from sixty to six-hundred and the endowment from \$2 million to \$20 million.

In light of the resistance he faced from faculty and others, Eliot was prudent enough not to simply mandate a completely elective system. Instead, he proceeded on a campaign of gradualism, which enabled him to outlast and, if necessary, outlive his opponents. In 1872 he abolished subject requirements for seniors. In 1879 he extended the elective system to juniors, and in 1884 to sophomores. By 1894, first year students were only required to take rhetoric and a modern language, and by 1897 the only prescribed course at Harvard was a year of freshman rhetoric.

Eliot's push for the elective system was not only opposed within Harvard but without as well. In 1885 Princeton's President James McCosh, a supporter of the traditional liberal arts tradition, engaged Eliot in a memorable debate on the elective system in front of the Nineteenth Century Club. McCosh noted that there were at least



twenty dilettanti courses at Harvard and, echoing Jeremiah Day, stated that “[e]ducation is essentially the training of the mind” (719). A firm believer in the old faculty psychology and unity of knowledge, McCosh believed students would take the easy way out if given a choice. But Eliot was unshaken. As Morrison (1936c) notes, Eliot was little concerned by the lazy student who might abuse the system. Instead, he wanted liberty for the strong and industrious student. Later, during the 1885-86 school year when Eliot proposed dropping Greek as a requirement for the arts degree, eight college presidents including Noah Porter of Yale asked the Board of Overseers to overrule him. They did not.

The unpopularity of Eliot’s reforms is noted by Morrison (1936c) who wrote that “[i]f at any time before 1886, perhaps before 1890, his policies had been referred to a plebiscite of Harvard Alumni, they surely would have been reversed” (358). Enrollment figures support Morrison’s observation. During the 1870s, enrollment at Harvard rose but 3.7 per cent compared to 37.3 per cent at Yale and 34 per cent at Princeton. However, Harvard’s enrollment would rise 66.4 per cent in the 1880s and 88.8 per cent in the 1890s.

The success of the elective system caused colleges everywhere to examine their own courses of study. Many colleges stayed with the traditional liberal arts because they believed in it, while others could not afford the expansion in faculty, staff, and facilities required to implement an elective system. Nevertheless, the success of the elective system meant utility had secured its place in the American college.

### THE GERMAN UNIVERSITY – PART THREE

The popularity of the German University received another boost when James Morgan Hart published an account of his experience studying in Germany titled *German Universities: A Narrative of Personal Experience* (1874). Hart, who had graduated from Princeton (A.B. 1860) and received a law degree from the University of Göttingen (1864), taught at Cornell from 1868 through 1872. After leaving Cornell, he returned to Germany and studied philology. Upon his return to America, he published his narrative, which quickly became a standard for students contemplating graduate study in Germany. His comparison of German universities to American colleges gave clear advantage to the former and undoubtedly spurred many to study in Germany. More importantly, his account illustrates why the German university proved so attractive to young American scholars. In his book, Hart (1874) described the German notion of a university:

To the German mind the collective idea of a university implies a *Zweck*, an object of study, and two *Bedingungen*, or conditions. The object is *Wissenschaft*; the conditions are *Lehrfreiheit* and *Lernfreiheit*. By *Wissenschaft* the Germans mean knowledge in the most exalted sense of that term, namely, the ardent, methodical, independent search after truth in any and all of its forms, but wholly irrespective of utilitarian application. *Lehrfreiheit* means that the one who teaches, the professor or *Privatdocent*, is free to teach what he chooses, as he chooses. *Lernfreiheit* or the freedom of learning, denotes the emancipation of the student from *Schulzwang*, compulsory drill by recitation. (249-50)

The professors in Germany, he added, “are one and all, with scarcely an exception, men who started in life as theoreticians and never made the effort to become practitioners. To them the university was not a mere preparatory school, where they might remain long enough to get their theoretical training, and then turn their backs on it forever. On the contrary, *it was an end, a career in itself*” (264) [emphasis added]. And again, he noted, the object of the German university is “to train not merely skillful practitioners, *but also future professors*” (257). Clearly, this was a major shift from the classical college’s viewpoint.

It is obvious that for Hart, and doubtless for many other young American scholars, one of the chief attractions of the German university was the realization that a scholar could make a career for himself in a university. Hart observed that a German professor was not a teacher in the English sense. Instead, he must first be a “special investigator” or researcher. Hart (1874) acknowledged both the “severe intellectual toil from morning till evening” (267) this entailed and the invigorating freedom that was part and parcel of a German professor’s life:

But there is a freedom about it that is inexpressibly fascinating. The professor is his own master. His time is not wasted in cudgeling the wits of refractory or listless reciters. . . . He lectures upon his chosen subject, comments upon his favorite Greek or Roman or early German or Sanscrit author, expounds some recently discovered mathematical theorem, discusses one or another of the grave problems of history or morals, and is accountable only to his own conscience of what is true and what is false. (268)

This was a far different academic life than the one young American scholars had witnessed in the American college. In America, professors drilled undergraduates via recitation; in Germany they were investigators seeking scholarly renown. In America, the professors were teachers, responsible for the moral and mental discipline of their students. In Germany, the professor was only responsible for the quality of his instruction. It was up to the students “to assimilate his instructor’s learning and, if possible, to add to it” (267). The professor’s “duty begins and ends with himself” (267). In addition, the German model offered upward mobility via scholarly merit. When the Germans seek to fill a chair, Hart (1874) wrote, they look to the young man “who has made his mark by recent publications or discoveries” (268).

It is no wonder that the German university proved so popular with young American scholars. For the first time, they could see an exciting career path in academia pursuing their own interests. Germany soon became the preferred choice for graduate study. As Josiah Royce (1891) observed:

But in those days there was a generation that dreamed of nothing but the German University. England one passed by. France, too, was then neglected. German scholarship was our master and our guide. . . . One went to Germany still a doubter as to the possibility of the theoretic life; one returned an idealist, devoted for the time to pure learning for learning’s sake, determined to contribute his *Scherflein* to the massive store of human knowledge, burning for a chance to help build the American University. (382-3)

## **JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY**

In 1876 the dream of an American University (as opposed to college) came to fruition with the founding of Johns Hopkins. The genesis of Johns Hopkins University began when Johns Hopkins, a Baltimore financier, left half of his seven million dollar estate<sup>3</sup> to fund a university, with no stipulations on what he expected of the university. As Daniel Coit Gilman (1906), Hopkins first president, observed, “The founder made no effort to unfold a plan. He simply used one word,—UNIVERSITY,—[sic]and he left it to his successors to declare its meaning in the light of the past, in the hope of the future” (128). It was up to his twelve trustees to determine what to make of Johns Hopkins University. Determined to make the institution one of national influence, the trustees set out to prepare themselves on the educational issues of the day by reading, visiting several campuses both in American and abroad, and questioning educational leaders.

According to Gilman, the trustees visited Harvard, Cornell, Yale, Michigan, Princeton, Virginia, and the University of Pennsylvania. In addition, two trustees visited English and other European institutions. The trustees interviewed Presidents Charles William Eliot of Harvard and James Burill Angell of Michigan in June and July of 1874 and corresponded with President White of Cornell. Two more conservative Presidents of the era, James McCosh of Princeton and Noah Porter of Harvard, refused their requests for interviews.

Interestingly, it was the trustees themselves who broached the idea of establishing a graduate university. While Eliot and Angell encouraged the trustees to establish professional schools, they felt establishing a graduate university was too ambitious. White, however, encouraged the idea of graduate study in his letter to the trustees. All

three men, together with Porter, were unanimous in recommending Daniel Coit Gilman as President.

Gilman met with the trustees on December 28, 1874. A month later, in a letter to a friend, Gilman described his view of what the new university should be:

I incline more & more to the belief that what is wanted in Baltimore is not a scientific school, nor a classical college, nor both combined; but a faculty of medicine, and a faculty of philosophy: that the usual college machinery of classes, commencements etc may be dispensed with: that each head of a great department, with his associates in the department,—say of mathematics, or of Language or of Chemistry or of History, etc. shall be as far as possible free from the interference of other heads of departments, & shall determine what scholars he will receive & how he will teach them; that advanced special students be first provided for; that degrees be given when scholars are ready to be graduated, in one year or in ten years after their admission. (qtd. in Veysey, 1965, 160).

Although the word “department” had been used in American colleges during the nineteenth century, it acquired a new connotation of disciplinary specialization and autonomy at Johns Hopkins. With this new emphasis on disciplinarity and specialization, recruiting the proper faculty was crucial. After being appointed President, Gilman set out recruiting the finest faculty he could find from both America and Europe. In *The Launching of a University* (1906), Gilman recounted the critical role the faculty would play in establishing the reputation of the university:

[T]he power of the university will depend upon the character of its resident staff of permanent professors. It is their researches in the library and the laboratory; their utterances in the classroom and in private; their example as students and investigators, as champions of the truth; their publications, through the journals and the scientific treatises, which will make the University of Baltimore an attraction to the best students, and serviceable to the intellectual growth of the land. (42)

Gilman hoped to attract the very top scholars of the day. However, as Hawkins (1960) notes, “the story of Gilman’s search for a faculty is largely a story of his failure to bring the men with established reputations to Hopkins” (39). Nevertheless, Gilman was determined to hire the best faculty he could using the following selection criteria:

In selecting a staff of teachers, the Trustees have determined to consider especially the devotion of the candidate to some particular line of study and the certainty of his eminence in that specialty; the power to pursue independent and original investigation, and to inspire the young with enthusiasm for study and research; the willingness to cooperate in building up a new institution; and the freedom from tendencies toward ecclesiastical or sectional controversies. (43)

When Gilman was unable to secure those scholars with the biggest reputations, he sought advice from an eminent physicist who wrote him, “Your difficulty applies only to old men who are great; these you can rarely move; but the young men of genius, learning and talent you can draw. They should be your strength” (Flexner 1969, 59-60). Taking this

advice to heart, Gilman hired a number of young scholars, the most outstanding of which was Henry A. Rowland.

While serving on the Board of Visitors at West Point in 1875, Gilman asked the faculty for suggestions on who to hire for the scientific departments at Hopkins. General Peter S. Michie, professor of physics at West Point, suggested Rowland, a young instructor at Rennselaer Polytechnic Institute, who had recently published an article in London's *Philosophical Magazine*. When Gilman asked why Rowland hadn't published it in the *American Journal of Science* at Yale, he learned that the editors there had turned it and two other of Rowland's papers down because he was too young. Gilman met with Rowland while at West Point. Rowland later came to Baltimore on June 25, 1875, and was likely hired on the spot (Hawkins 1960). Two weeks later, upon the Board's suggestion, Rowland accompanied Gilman on his recruiting trip to Europe. Rowland did not return with Gilman, but stayed on in Berlin a while to work in Helmholtz's laboratory where he made an important discovery in electronics, proving that a moving charged conductor would affect a magnet like an electric current. On December 6, the Board made Rowland "assistant in the Department of Physics" and authorized him to purchase apparatus for his laboratory. In April, he was promoted to professor of physics.

When Johns Hopkins opened in 1876, a new era in American higher education was ushered in. Never before in American higher education had there been such a focus on graduate study and research. As Gilman would later recall, the trustees

soon perceived that there was no obvious call for another 'college.' . . . There was no call for another technological or scientific school. . . . On the other hand, there seemed to be a demand for scientific laboratories and



professorships, the directors of which would be free to pursue their own researches, stimulating their students to prosecute study with a truly scientific spirit and aim. (qtd. in Flexner 1908, 54)

Indeed, if Gilman had had his way, Johns Hopkins would have offered only graduate study; however, the trustees prevailed upon him to provide undergraduate instruction as well, noting that the youth of Baltimore had a claim upon the Hopkins foundation and shouldn't have to leave the city to pursue their college education. Nevertheless, Johns Hopkins clearly focused on graduate education and research.

Josiah Royce (1891), one of the initial twenty Fellows (graduate students receiving stipends) at Hopkins from 1876 to 1878, described the revolutionary feeling associated with the new university, "Here at last, so we felt, the American University had been founded. The 'conflict' between 'classical' and 'scientific' education was henceforth to be without significance for the graduate student. And the graduate student was to be, so we told ourselves, the real student" (383). Royce went on to note a crucial difference between the old college and the new university. "[T]he academic business was something much more noble and serious than such 'discipline' had been in its time. The University wanted its children to be, if possible, not merely well-informed, but productive" (383). While the old college had been content to preserve and transmit knowledge; the new university aimed to create new knowledge. In effect, the old liberal arts college had been turned on its head (see Table 9).

**Table 9**  
**A Comparison of the Classical American College vs. the Nineteenth-Century Modern American University**

	<b>Classical American College</b>	<b>Modern American University</b>
<b>Purpose</b>	Transmit culture & train statesmen	Expand Knowledge
<b>Student's Goal</b>	Confirm one's respectable place in society	Achieve Upward Mobility
<b>Philosophy</b>	Christian	Positivist
<b>Pedagogical Theory</b>	Faculty Psychology, Mental Discipline	Experimental Psychology & Apperception
<b>Curriculum</b>	Prescribed; Liberal Arts	Elective
<b>Method</b>	Oral (Recitation)	Written (Examination)
<b>Languages of Instruction</b>	Latin and Greek	English
<b>Faculty</b>	Generalists	Specialists
<b>Student Body</b>	Upper class, white males	Upper and middle class males. Some females and minorities.
<b>Focus</b>	Undergraduate	Graduate

Gilman encouraged his faculty to publish their work. While in Germany, he came to see the importance of scholarly journals as outlets for faculty research. At the time, there were very few such publications in America other than *the American Journal of Science* and the *Smithsonian Contributions to Knowledge*. Johns Hopkins quickly gave birth to a number of scholarly journals. Professor Sylvester, whom Gilman had hired from England where he was editor of the British *Quarterly Journal of Pure and Applied Mathematics*, is credited with founding the *American Journal of Mathematics* in 1878. However, as Sylvester noted in his farewell address upon leaving America in 1883:

You have spoken of our Mathematical Journal. Who is the founder? Mr. Gilman is continually telling people that I founded it. That is one of my claims to recognition that I strenuously deny. I assert that he is the founder. Almost the first day I landed in Baltimore, when I dined with him in the presence of Reverdy (sic) Johnson and Judge Brown, I think from the first moment he began to plague me to found a Mathematical Journal on this side of the water, something similar to the *Quarterly Journal of Pure and Applied Mathematics* with which my name was connected as nominal editor. I said it was useless, there were no materials for it. Again and again he returned to the charge and again and again I threw all the cold water I could on the scheme; nothing but the most obstinate persistence and perseverance brought his views to prevail. To him and him alone, therefore, is really due whatever importance attaches to the foundation of the *American Journal of Mathematics*. (Flexner 1908, 70-1)

Other Hopkins Professors established journals as well. Professor Remsen founded the *American Chemical Journal* (1879), Professor Gildersleeve the *American Journal of Philology* (1880), Professor Elliott *Modern Language Notes*—the forerunner of *PMLA*—(1886), and Professor Herbert B. Adams the *Johns Hopkins Studies in Historical and Political Science* (1882) (Flexner 1908; French 1946).

The success of Johns Hopkins University was quickly recognized by others and it was not long before other institutions were imitating Hopkins. Harvard President Eliot admitted that

the graduate school of Harvard University, started feebly in 1870 and 1871, did not thrive, until the example of Johns Hopkins forced our Faculty to put their strength into the development of our instruction for Graduates. And what was true of Harvard was true of every other university in the land which aspired to create an advanced school of arts and sciences. (Flexner 1908, 108-9)

### **COMPETING AIMS OF THE NEW UNIVERSITY**

The success of the new Cornell and Johns Hopkins Universities together with the Harvard reforms marked the beginning of new foci for American universities. From the founding of Harvard in the seventeenth century until the end of the Civil War, the purpose of a college education in America had been to transmit Christian culture, teach potential statesmen (citizenship), and impart mental discipline via the study of the classics. Indeed, as late as 1879, G. Stanley Hall estimated that of the over three hundred colleges in America all but perhaps twenty were still led by men who believed in mental discipline. However, during the latter third of the nineteenth century that would change as three new goals—utility, research, and liberal culture—would compete within the new university for dominance (Veysey 1965). Various parts of what would become known as English studies would align themselves with each of these goals.

#### **Utility**

The first of these, utility, was a catch-all phrase combining the call for a more “practical” education linked to “real” life with the notion of public service. The call for greater utility in American higher education can be traced back at least as far as Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson. And, of course, many of the attempted reforms of the

1820s as well as Wayland's calls for reform in the 1840s and 50s were utility-based.

However, it was not until after the Civil War that utility-focused education would come into its own with the founding of Cornell and the reform of Harvard. The Presidents of these two institutions, Andrew White of Cornell and Charles William Eliot of Harvard, would champion the utility movement.

The utility movement was said to be democratic in that it called for equality among courses of study and expanded admission policies including admitting women, African Americans, and Jews. It also promoted nonsectarianism, though its leaders were still predominately Christian. By promoting an elective curriculum, it expanded study and encouraged specialization, professional training, and a greater focus on vocation. It valued science and technology for its practical applications. But unlike supporters of the research aim such as Gilman who valued knowledge for its own sake, utility-minded reformers such as Eliot did not believe in knowledge for its own sake. And while those favoring the research aim focused on graduate education, the utility movement primarily emphasized changes in undergraduate education.

The utility movement was also associated with the idea of public service. President White hoped that a four-year undergraduate course in "History, Political & Social Science & General Jurisprudence" might prove a training ground for politically minded reformers.<sup>4</sup> In 1909 Lincoln Steffens promoted the "Wisconsin idea" in his article "The State Goes to College." The "Wisconsin idea" sought to bring the expert into government and to bring education via the extension system throughout the state.

From 1865 through 1875, writes Veysey (1965), "almost every visible change in the pattern of American higher education lay in the direction of concessions to the

utilitarian type of demand for reform” (60). Undoubtedly, the utility movement was most associated with the elective curriculum ideal. By the end of the nineteenth century, the battle for the elective curriculum had been won. Ironically, its victory left the utility movement rudderless. However, the institutional bureaucracy spawned by the demands of the elective curriculum for specialization continued on and would eventually be co-opted by those with other ideals (Veysey 1965).

### **Research**

Imported from the German university by American scholars who didn't fully understand the German concept, the research ideal began to gain momentum during the mid 1870s. Although some American scholars such as the *neuen Amerikaner* had studied in Germany prior to the Civil War, they were the exception and not the rule. Besides, with Hegelian idealism in vogue in the German universities at the time, those few who studied in Germany prior to the Civil War were much more likely to become Transcendentalists or literary romantics than advocates of research. It was not until the 1850s that research methodology became associated with the German university and it was the mid 1870s before the research ideal was seen as the sum of the German system (Veysey 1965).

With the publication of Hart's *German Universities: A Narrative of Personal Experience* in 1874 and the founding of Johns Hopkins in 1876, American interest in the German university skyrocketed. Over the next twenty years, more and more American scholars went to Germany for their training, reaching a peak in 1895-6 when 517 Americans graduated from German institutions. Upon their return, these German-trained, American scholars brought back with them a devotion to German methodology.

However, as both Veysey (1965) and Novick (1988) suggest, American scholars conflated German research methodology to mean science itself.

During the course of the nineteenth century the American conception of “science” underwent a radical change. Prior to 1850, science in America referred to any organized body of principles regarding an area of knowledge. Thus, both geometry and ethics were considered sciences. Science was deductive in that it searched for universal laws. With the rise of Darwinism, the meaning of science began to shift away from law-like generalizations to the notions of induction, specific evidence, and empirical methodology (Veysey 1965).

At the German University, American scholars quickly embraced the scientific methodology of their German professors. Unlike their American college professors who largely taught by recitation, German professors were actively researching phenomena in labs or libraries. Understandably exhilarated by their exposure to active learning, American scholars returned home eager to establish their own labs, expand their libraries, and continue their own research interests. However, in invoking the German method of *wissenschaftliche Objektivität*, they invoked a positivism Germans would not have recognized.

The German university of the nineteenth century was hardly today’s Research I institution. It’s three central themes were non-utilitarian learning, the value of disciplinary investigation (not necessarily empirical in nature), and an epistemological idealism. Veysey (1970) suggests that the German ideal of nonutilitarian or “pure” learning was transformed into the notion of “pure” science by Americans who imbued it with a methodological connotation rarely found in Germany. Similarly, Americans

overlooked the idealist philosophical tradition Germans associated with investigation, limiting investigation to something scientific.

As a result, the American research ideal was quite different than any German conception. The American research ideal combined painstaking German methodology, a vulgarized Baconian view of science which was rigidly empirical and avoided hypotheses, and the blank-slate psychology of John Locke (Novick 1988). In essence, American scholars believed that by objectively examining phenomena they would be able to discover reality with a capital R. As astronomer and geologist Thomas Chamberlin put it:

Facts and rigorous inductions from facts displace all preconceptions; all deductions from general principles, all favorite theories. The dearest doctrines, the most fascinating hypotheses, the most cherished [sic] creations of the reason and of the imagination are put in subjection to determinate facts. If need be, previous intellectual affections are crushed [sic] without hesitation or remorse. Facts take their place before reasoning and before ideals, even though the reasoning and ideals be seemingly more beautiful, be seemingly more lofty, be seemingly truer--until the clearer vision comes. (qtd. in Veysey 136-7)

Edward Ross recalls, as the keynote of his educational experience at the University of Berlin in the 1880s, hearing “that majestic phrase, *wissenschaftliche Objektivität*” (qtd. in Novick 1988, 24). The research ideal quickly gained ground with American scholars, and by 1890 research had become one of the dominant concerns of the American university.



## Liberal Culture

The liberal culture ideal did not appear on the scene until the end of the nineteenth century after the utility and research ideals had achieved dominance and become interrelated. Humanities-based, the liberal culture ideal was in part a reaction against utility's practicality and research's obsession with the fact. Supporters of the liberal culture ideal such as Hiram Corson (1894) argued for a different kind of practical education: "The most *practical* education is the education of the spiritual man" (72). For according to the liberal culture ideal, man himself was the proper focus of education. "All science, all scholarship, all art, all literature, and all philosophy," wrote George Trumbull Ladd (1902) of Yale, "exist . . . not for their own sake, but for man's sake" (39). Supporters of the utility ideal believed the elevation of the research had brought higher education in America to a crossroads. In "The Spirit of the Western University" (1897), Herbert Bates wrote:

Education, we all know, is dividing into two parties: the party of those who seek fact, and the party of those who seek inspiration through fact; the party of mere science, and the party of those who demand not only science, but beauty. Germany stands mainly on the side of mere fact; England and France on the side of culture; America hangs in the balance. (qtd. in Veysey 1965, 181)

Those supporting the liberal culture ideal were a decided minority in academia, albeit a vocal one. For the most part, they were limited to the departments of English, philosophy, and fine arts. Even there, however, they met opposition. Within English

departments, for example, philologists viewed the study of language as a science while some classicists still held fast to the old college's mental discipline ideal.

The liberal culture ideal valued the individual's uniqueness, taste, beauty, character, breadth of knowledge, and the notion of genteel cultivation. Charles Eliot Norton of Harvard wrote:

The highest end of the highest education is not anything which can be directly taught, but is the consummation of all studies. It is the final result of intellectual culture in the development of the breadth, serenity, and solidity of mind, and in the attainment of that complete self-possession which finds expression in character. (qtd. in Veysey 1965, 186-7)

The liberal culture ideal can be seen not only a reaction against research and utility but also an evolution of the old mental discipline ideal. For example, those arguing to retain Latin and Greek in the curriculum did so on the grounds that studying the languages produced mental discipline and familiarity with the richest literature in our culture. Of course, some liberal culture advocates viewed the older supporters of mental discipline as allies rather than soulmates.

The most striking difference between advocates of liberal culture and those of mental discipline and piety was the former's tendency to downgrade religion. During the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, colleges moved away from religion to ethics. Professors at Yale and Brown, Veysey (1965) notes, argued that if the Bible were taught it should be presented as any other literary work and be subject to the same scholarly analysis. Many saw religion as a threat. Irving Babbitt wrote that "[t]he humanities need to be defended to-day against the encroachments of physical science, as

they once needed to be against the encroachments of theology” (qtd. in Rudolph 1962, 31).

Rather than Christianity, advocates of liberal culture made a religion out of civilization. For them, civilization began with the ancient Greeks approximately 2500 years ago. The humanistic “truths” of liberal culture were both eternal and evolving. Since the classical standards of art, literature, music, and philosophy of ancient Greece had endured, they were recognized as both norms and seen as shaping modern culture. Thus, culture was progressive and yet rested on eternal, universal human values. Courses such as “Western Civilization” soon were created to trace this very progression.

#### **THE PEDAGOGICAL REVOLUTION**

No account of the transformation of the traditional liberal arts college into the modern university would be complete without mentioning the role played by radical changes in pedagogy. In his essay “Education and the Genesis of Disciplinarity,” Hoskin (1993) writes that disciplinarity and its continuing growth is the result of three changes in educational practice during the late eighteenth century:

- 1) the introduction of constant rigorous examination
- 2) the use of numerical grading
- 3) the insistent process of writing by students, about students, and organizationally around students.

These changes transformed the way students learned. In the traditional liberal arts college the principal pedagogical method was recitation. Exams were oral and were graded qualitatively rather than quantitatively. And students were ranked, not graded.

The new emphasis on examination, grading, and writing had two effects. First, it imposed a disciplinary power over the student via a “constant surveillance and calculating judgment” (273) over performance. Additionally, numerical grading promoted competition, not only with other students but within the individual student. Thus, students became self-disciplining.

Secondly, argues Hoskin (1993), these new practices altered the view toward knowledge. In the traditional liberal arts college, knowledge was seen as a closed system. Students and faculty were not there to add to knowledge; rather the faculty was supposed to transmit existing knowledge to the student. But students who learned under the new practices entered a new eco-system of knowledge, one in which they were appraised and rewarded for knowledge. Under this new system, these new learners began to construct new disciplines and new disciplinary knowledge by thinking, questioning, and writing. One side effect of this was the creation of a “credential society” (274).

The practices of examination, numerical grading, and writing developed in three specific educational sites: the seminar (in Germany around 1760), the laboratory (in France around 1780), and the classroom (in Scotland around 1760). The first seminar emerged within the new of philology and was taught by J.M. Gesner at Göttingen. However, it was not until Gesner’s successor, Christian Gottlob Heyne, took over that the seminar adopted a new pedagogy stressing writing and grading rather than the traditional method of oral recitation and disputation. As Heyne notes, the seminar was designed so students “might be motivated not to let their studies rest at listening to lectures and reading but rather be awakened to their own individual activity, to reflect on what they have heard, to write down what they have thought” (282). By the turn of the nineteenth

century, the medieval requirement of an oral disputation had become a requirement to write a dissertation (Clark 1984).

Another important result of the new pedagogy was that texts were no longer viewed as inviolable objects. Instead, students internalized a new emphasis on hermeneutical examination. In 1786 Friedrich August Wolf began his influential Philological Seminar at the University of Halle and his landmark work questioning the authorship of the Homeric poems, the *Prolegomena to Homer* (1795), would illustrate the power of textual criticism. By the 1780s German university administrators were requiring those directing seminars to write reports. Thus, discipline extended to the faculty as well (Hoskin 1993).

Laboratory-based science emerged in France under the direction of Gaspard Monge, the inventor of descriptive geometry and force behind the founding of the *Ecole Polytechnique* in 1794. In 1782 Monge took over the teaching of laboratory-based chemistry class. Like Heyne, Monge introduced active learning and examination. Instead of watching the professor or an assistant demonstrate an experiment, the student was required to undertake a hands-on approach and was later examined over the assigned material. Because of his stature as the greatest scientist of the day, Monge was able to institutionalize his pedagogical practices throughout the Ecoles.

The classroom method can be traced back to Glasgow University where the first English language usage of the term occurred at a faculty meeting in 1762 in which Adam Smith was one of the faculty members present. George Jardine, one of Smith's students, popularized the method. In his *Outlines of Philosophical Education* (1818), Jardine outlined the classroom method that included detailed lesson plans, including written notes

which were used to test students orally, and later further examination via written essay and a final exam. These new practices didn't reach America until the nineteenth century when returning students from Europe brought them back with them.

### **CHARACTERISTICS AND IDEALS OF THE MODERN AMERICAN UNIVERSITY**

By the end of the nineteenth century, the modern university had become one of the most important institutions in America, a major feat considering that at the beginning of the century the traditional college risked becoming superfluous to American society. However, the characteristics and ideals of the modern American university were virtually polar opposites of the colonial/classical American college. While the characteristics of the colonial/classical American college were associated with culture, citizenship (and identifying the elite for leadership), or mental discipline, the characteristics of the modern American university are associated with either the utility or research ideal (see Table 10). The liberal culture ideal, which is actually an evolution of the *artes liberales* ideal, had lost its influence in the modern university to the utility and research ideals. That is not to say that the liberal culture ideal vanished completely, but rather that it was now the voice of dissent rather than of authority.

**Table 10**  
**A Comparison of the Characteristics and Ideals of the Classical American College vs.**  
**The Modern American University**

<b>Characteristics of the Classical American College</b>	<b>Associated Ideal</b>	<b>Characteristics of the Modern American University</b>	<b>Associated Ideal</b>
Transmit Knowledge	Culture & Citizenship	Create Knowledge	Research
Christian Philosophy	Culture	Positivist Philosophy	Research
Generalist Faculty	Culture	Specialist Faculty	Research
Undergraduate Focus	Culture	Graduate Focus	Research
Faculty Psychology	Mental Discipline	Experimental Psychology & Apperception	Research
Recitation	Mental Discipline	Written Examination	Utility
Prescribed Liberal Arts Curriculum	Culture & Mental Discipline	Elective Curriculum	Utility
Upper class white male student body	Citizenship	All Classes	Utility
Confirm elite status	Citizenship	Upward Mobility	Utility

## CHAPTER NINE

# THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF ENGLISH COMPOSITION

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*About the year 1870 a change began to make itself felt, first in numbers and then in the methods of the college, which gradually brought about what amounted to a revolution. The classes increased in size nearly fourfold, so as to become wholly unmanageable for oral recitation, and the elective system was greatly enlarged; step by step, the oral method of instruction was then abandoned, and a system of lectures, with periodic written examinations, took its place; so that at the last the whole college work was practically done in writing. The need of facility in written expression was, of course, correspondingly increased. Without the power of writing in his mother tongue readily and legibly a college student was not equipped for the work he had to do.*

—Report of the Committee on Composition and Rhetoric 1897

### THE NEW GRAMMATOCENTRIC WORLD

As the authors<sup>1</sup> of the fourth Harvard Report astutely note in the epigraph above, American higher education underwent a fundamental shift around 1870 from a predominately oral method of instruction and examination to a written one. This shift had an impact across the curriculum and opened the door for English studies. Hoskin (1993) traces the roots of this pedagogical shift to Heyne's philological seminar in Germany over a hundred years earlier. "When Heyne took over from Gesner, in 1763," writes Hoskin, "his great innovation was none other than the imposition of a rigorous pedagogy stressing writing and examination" (283). This shift to written examination, argues Hoskin, transformed education into "a *grammatocentric* world" (295):

Under *grammatocentrism*, everything centers or tends toward writing.

Everyone needs to learn not just to read but to write; all are to be disciplined



by the learning of the disciplines. As a result students, work forces, armies, and even families are made the subjects of expert knowledge, embodied in plans, charts, accounts, appraisals, manuals, advice literature, all validated by disciplinary specialists. It is also the world where multiple media proliferate, some, like the electronic, apparently promoting a “secondary orality,” but all ultimately dependent upon the power of writing, from the hardwiring of technologies to the softwiring of the organizational forms through which the new media are produced and disseminated. Grammatocentrism rules.

In addition to the increased class size mentioned in the Harvard Report and the new pedagogy noted by Hoskin, there were other factors at work as well. As Kaufer and Carley (1993) write, the advent of greater printing speed via the rotary press and improved paper making technology during the middle of the nineteenth century dramatically increased the availability of written texts throughout society.<sup>2</sup> Mass distribution of printed materials created a vast new audience/market. Literacy quickly became a paramount concern throughout education. Bledstein (1976) notes two other factors that contributed to the development of higher education in America (and, I would add, to a greater emphasis upon literacy): a growing middle class and an emerging culture of professionalism. “Americans after 1870, but beginning after 1840,” writes Bledstein (1976), “committed themselves to a culture of professionalism which over the years has established the thoughts, habits, and responses most Americans have taken for granted, a culture which has admirably served individuals who aspire to think well of themselves” (80-1).

With the immense bloodshed of the Civil War, the political scandals of the Grant administration and Boss Tweed, the ruthless practices of monopolists, and the challenge of evolution to religion, the world of middle-class Americans had suddenly become if not an irrational place, at least, one that no longer seemed to operate under a divine plan. Two of the main attractions of the culture of professionalism, Bledstein (1979) argues, were that it enabled people to organize their lives in a seemingly rational way and that it promised advancement based on merit. The institution that produced and credentialed the new professionals was the university.

As Larson (1977) notes, “The core of the professionalization project is the production of professional producers; this process tends to be centered in and allied with the modern university” (50). Bledstein (1979) agrees:

The time has come to view the American university in a different light, as a vital part in the culture of professionalism in which it first emerged and matured in the years 1870 to 1900. . . . Internally, students, faculty, and administrators have used the institution in various ways as a vehicle for their ambition. Externally, a society in search of authority has located in universities a source of nonpartisan expertise and technical know-how. (288)

To obtain the vertical vision of upward mobility, to become the successful capitalist professional in the grammatocentric society of the late nineteenth century, the middle class first needed to master the tools of literacy. Enter English composition.

## **COMPOSITION**

Composition had long been a staple of the classical curriculum as part of the study of rhetoric, pre-dating the American college. Originally, composition, referred to oral

discourse. Still, as Perrin notes, written compositions were required at Harvard from as early as 1642: “[A]ll undergraduates declaiming in their usual courses in the hall: shall after their said declamations ended deliver a copy of each of them fairly written unto the praisident or senior fellow then present unless they have before shewed it to their tutor for his perussall” (qtd. in Crowley 1998, 49). In the classical curriculum, composition, though taught principally as part of rhetoric, was integrated across the curriculum. The subject matter for composition typically dealt with moral (Christian culture) or civic (citizenship) issues. For example, Morison (1936a) lists the following eighteenth century commencement theses and questions:

1729 Is unlimited obedience to rulers taught by Christ and His Apostles?

Joseph Green argues the negative.

1733 Is the Voice of the People the Voice of God? Nathanael Whitaker argues the affirmative.

1743 Is it Lawful to resist the Supreme Magistrate, if the Commonwealth cannot otherwise be preserved? Samuel Adams argues the affirmative.

1743, 1747, 1751, 1761, 1762. Does Civil Government originate from Compact? Samuel Downe, Thomas Cushing, Charles Chauncy, Thomas Wentworth and Nathan Goodale argue the affirmative.

(90-91)

In their rhetoric classes, students studied composition in the works of classical writers in Latin and Greek. Even the authors of the Yale Report recognized composition as central to a classical education:

In laying the foundation of a thorough education, it is necessary that all the important mental faculties be brought into exercise. . . . From the pure mathematics, he learns the art of demonstrative reasoning. In attending to the physical sciences, he becomes familiar with facts, with the process of induction, and the varieties of probable evidence. In ancient literature, he finds some of the most finished models of taste. By English reading, he learns the power of the language in which he is to speak and write. By logic and mental philosophy, he is taught the art of thinking; by rhetoric and oratory, the art of speaking. *By frequent exercise on written composition, he acquires copiousness and accuracy of expression [emphasis added].* (278-79)

Still, the Yale Report was not advocating English composition. However, as Crowley (1998) observes, by the middle of the nineteenth century, classical texts had been replaced in American rhetoric courses by works on the new rhetoric by authors such as Blair, Campbell, and Whately. These works, of course, were written in English.

#### **INSTITUTIONALIZING ENGLISH COMPOSITION**

The institutionalization of English composition resulted in two incredible ironies. One, the very reason the study of English had been excluded from the classical curriculum—the claim that it wasn't difficult enough to merit attention—would eventually be turned on its head—English was too difficult for incoming college students—to establish English composition as the lone requirement in the modern university. And two, English composition, a discipline which never existed in the classical curriculum, would become the repository of the goals and ideals of the classical college within the modern university.

As was noted in the previous chapter, classicists believed modern English was too easy because it was an uninflected language. Only its linguistic forbear, Anglo-Saxon, an inflected language like Latin and Greek, was deemed worthy of collegiate study, and it did not enter the curriculum until 1825. English literature, as we shall see in the next chapter, faced even more obstacles than the English language to winning its place in the curriculum. And so it fell to English composition to break down the barriers to English studies.

In the end, all it took was two simple steps: (1) establish an entrance exam in English that the majority of applicants fail and (2) create a remedial course in English composition for those students. Together, these two events created a self-reinforcing mechanism, i.e., an emergent structure that “locks-in” a certain system (Goggin and Beatty 2000).<sup>3</sup> Just as the QWERTY keyboard arrangement became “locked-in” on typewriters and now computers keyboards despite the fact that more efficient keyboard arrangements are both available and feasible, first-year composition became established in the university curriculum despite what Greenbaum (1969) referred to nearly thirty-five years ago as a century-long “tradition of complaint” regarding the subject.<sup>4</sup> Self-reinforcing mechanisms are often the result of chance and circumstance, and that was certainly the case with first-year composition, which as we shall see was originally envisioned merely as a short-term stopgap measure.

### **COLLEGE ENTRANCE EXAMS**

The first known admission requirements for an American college were established at Harvard in 1642. They were written in Latin accompanied by the following translation:

When any Scholar is able to read Tully or such like classical Latin Author ex tempore, and make and speake true Latin in verse and prose, suo ut ajunt Marte [a Latin proverb meaning by one's own exertions, i.e., without any assistance whatsoever], and decline perfectly the paradigms of nounes and verbes in ye Greeke tongue, then may hee bee admitted into ye College, nor shall any claime admission before such qualifications. (Broome 1903, 18)

During the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Greek entrance requirements were stiffened and an arithmetic requirement was added at Yale and other colleges (but not at Harvard which didn't add math until the 19<sup>th</sup> century). Thus, prior to 1800, the only subjects with entrance requirements in most colleges were Latin, Greek, and math.<sup>5</sup>

In 1819 the College of New Jersey (Princeton) established the first known entrance requirement in English, stating applicants must be “well acquainted” with English grammar. By 1860 most colleges had a similar requirement (Hays 1946). Trachsel recites a typical entrance examination in English grammar given at Illinois Industrial University (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign) in 1870:

1. Name the vowels; the labials, the dentals; the palatals.
2. Define Etymology; the name and different classes of words.
3. Give the different modes of expressing gender in English—illustrate each.
4. Give the four rules for the formation of the plural of nouns, and an example under each.
5. Give four rules for the formation of the possessive case of names; and write the possessive plural of *lady*, *man*, *wife*.
6. Give the distinction between personal and relative pronouns.

7. What are auxiliary verbs? Name them.
8. Give the third-person singular of the verb *sit* in all the tenses of the indicative mood.
9. He said that that that that that pupil parsed was not that that he should have parsed. Parse the *that*'s in this sentence.
10. He that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out. Between you and I there is much mischief in that plan. I intended last year to have visited you. Correct these sentences, and give four reasons for your corrections.  
(qtd. in Crowley 1998, 65)

As Trachsel rightly observes, such an “exam does not require students to read or compose in English, but to simply describe its rules and its irregularities” (qtd. in Crowley 1998, 65). In other words, students were examined on their knowledge of grammatical rules and their application, which, of course, was the focus used to teach classical grammar. However, as Applebee observed, there was one critical difference: “The shift of grammatical studies from the classics to English involved a shift from a method of teaching a foreign language to correcting a native one” (Applebee 1974, 6-7).

The first standalone requirement for English composition was established by the College of New Jersey in 1870 when they expanded their admission requirements in English by adding that candidates should be able to write a “Short and Simple English Composition.” In 1873 the University of Michigan under President Angell adopted a requirement in rhetoric as well as grammar. Incoming students were to have studied “Hart’s Composition and Rhetoric with special attention to Chapter I., Part I., on Punctuation and Capitals, and to Chapters VIII. and IX., Part II., on Proof-reading, and

on the Study of the English Language” (Hays 1936, 16). A year later, Harvard added the first literature requirement, albeit indirectly as we shall see in a bit.

### **HARVARD'S INFLUENCE ON ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS**

Harvard played a pivotal role in the institutionalization of English. As Kitzhaber (1953) notes, during the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Harvard was the most influential English program in the country. The prime mover behind Harvard's influence was Charles W. Eliot, who assumed the presidency of Harvard in 1869. From the outset of his presidency, Eliot championed the study of English. In his inaugural address, Eliot (1901) decried “the prevailing neglect of the systematic study of the English language” (2). In addition, he called for new methods of teaching, paying special attention to the teaching of language:

In every department of learning the University would search out by trial and reflection the best methods of instruction. The University believes in the thorough study of language. It contends for all languages—Oriental, Greek, Latin, Romance, German, and *especially for the mothertongue*; seeing in them all one institution, one history, one means of discipline, one department of learning. *In teaching languages, it is for this American generation to invent, or to accept from abroad, better tools than the old [emphasis added]; to devise, or to transplant from Europe, prompter and more comprehensive methods than the prevailing; and to command more intelligent labor, in order to gather rapidly and surely the best fruit of that culture and have time for other harvests. (2)*



Eliot believed that colleges and schools must work together for educational reform, stating that if the educational “structure needs rebuilding, it must be rebuilt from the foundation” (5). To induce such reform, Eliot noted, Harvard had begun expanding its entrance requirements, including its requirements in English.

Harvard’s initial requirement in English had appeared in 1865 and consisted of the following statement in the 1865 catalogue under “Requisites for Admission”:  
“Candidates will also be examined in reading English aloud” (Hill, Briggs, and Hurlbutt 1896, 55). In the catalogue for 1869-70, the year Eliot assumed the presidency of Harvard, English appeared for the first time as a separate heading as an admission requirement and went into greater detail: “Students are also required to be examined, as early as possible after their admission, in reading English. Prizes will be awarded for excellence. For 1870 students may prepare themselves in Craik’s English of Shakespeare (Julius Caesar) or in Milton’s Comus. Attention to Derivation and Critical Analysis is recommended” (Hill, Briggs, and Hurlbutt 1896, 67). It’s unclear whether these were oral or written exams. The reference to derivation and Craik’s textbook, which contained such derivations, suggests the sort of recitation students commonly performed in prep schools (Crowley 1998).

In his annual report for 1872-73, Eliot called for both a greater focus on correctness and a greater familiarity with English literature:

The need for some requisition [requirement] which should secure on the part of the young men preparing for college proper attention to their own language has long been felt. Bad spelling, incorrectness as well as inelegance of expression in writing, ignorance of the simplest rules of punctuation, and

almost entire want of familiarity with English literature, are far from rare among young men of eighteen otherwise well prepared to pursue their college studies. (qtd. in Hays 1946, 433)

Not surprisingly, Harvard's entrance requirements in English were aimed at correcting these perceived deficiencies. The catalogue for 1872-73 indicated the first written examination and warned students that "correct spelling, punctuation, and expression, as well as legible handwriting, are expected of all applicants for admission; and failure in any of these particulars will be taken into account at the examination" (Hill, Briggs, and Hurlbutt 1896, 55).

A year later, the catalogue for 1873-74 specified that

each candidate will be required to write a short English Composition, correct in spelling, punctuation, grammar, and expression, the subject to be taken from such works of standard authors as shall be announced from time to time. The subject for 1874 will be taken from one of the following works: Shakespeare's *Tempest*, *Julius Caesar*, and *Merchant of Venice*; Goldsmith's *Vicar of Wakefield*; Scott's *Ivanhoe* and *Lay of the Last Minstrel*. (Hill, Briggs, and Hurlbutt 1896, 55).

Here we see not only a requirement for correctness in written English but also a budding canon of literary works. Within five years the number of authors had doubled and the number of titles increased by a third (Hays 1936). Years later, Adams Sherman Hill, who replaced Child as Boylston Professor and thus was in charge of composition from 1876 until his retirement in 1904, described the aims of the new requirement:

It was hoped that this requirement would effect several desirable objects, —that the student, by becoming familiar with a few works holding a high place in English literature, would acquire a taste for good reading, and would insensibly adopt better methods of thought and better forms of expression; that teachers would be led to seek subjects for composition in the books named, subjects far preferable to the vague generalities too often selected, and that they would pay closer attention to errors in elementary matters; that, in short, this recognition by the College of the importance of English would lead both teachers and pupils to give more time to the mother tongue, and to employ the time thus given to better advantage. (Hill, Briggs, and Hurlbutt 1896, 8)

Clearly, Harvard hoped to influence not only potential students but also their prep school curriculum with its new requirement.

The 1878 Catalogue added proper paragraphing as a requirement stating that the candidate's "short English Composition" must be correct not only "in spelling, punctuation, grammar, and expression," but also in "division by paragraphs" (Hill, Briggs, and Hurlbutt 1896, 55). Here again, the emphasis on correctness is apparent. In 1879, the following sentence was added to the Harvard requirement to ensure students understood their responsibility for the canon: "Every candidate is expected to be familiar with *all* the books in this list" (Hill, Briggs, and Hurlbutt 1896, 55). In all probability, the English entrance exam (See Table 11) was modeled upon the Latin and Greek entrance exams that typically required knowledge of canonical texts as well as grammar (Crowley 1998).

**Table 11**  
**1879 Harvard English Composition Entrance Exam**

Write a short composition upon one of the subjects given below.

Before beginning to write, consider what you have to say on the subject selected, and arrange your thoughts in logical order.

Aim at quality rather than quantity of work.

Carefully revise your composition, correcting all errors in punctuation, spelling, grammar, division by paragraphs, and expression, and making each sentence as clear and forcible as possible. If time permits, make a clean copy of the revised work.

- I. The Character of Sir Richard Steele.
- II. The Duke of Marlborough as portrayed by Thackeray.
- III. The Style of "Henry Esmond."
- IV. Thackeray's account of the Pretender's visit to England.
- V. Duelling in the Age of Queen Anne.

Candidates were given an hour to complete the exam. Of the 316 applicants who took the English composition entrance exam, 157 failed. According to Hill, applicants failed for a number of reasons, including ignorance of the subject matter, poor spelling, poor punctuation, ungrammatical and obscure sentences, "and some by absolute illiteracy" (Hill, Briggs, and Hurlbutt 1896, 10). The source of the problem, Hill argues, was inadequate preparation in English composition by the prep schools. The solution was to raise both the quality of the prep school instructor in English and the standards of instruction. Until that occurred, the "interim" solution was a college first year course in

English composition (Hill, Briggs, and Hurlbutt 1896). However, an interim solution can quickly become a permanent solution if it becomes part of a self-reinforcing mechanism. As Crowley (1998) observes, “The entrance examination in English *repeatedly and continually* created appropriate subjects for the study of English—subjects who were visibly, graphically, unable to meet Harvard’s standards [emphasis added]” (71).

The 1882 entrance exam took correctness even further as a candidate was now “required to correct specimens of bad English given him at the time of the examination” (Hill, Briggs, and Hurlbutt 1896, 55).

### **HARVARD COMPOSITION**

In 1872 Eliot recruited his Harvard classmate Adams Sherman Hill (class of '53), a lawyer-turned-journalist, to become the assistant to Francis James Child, the Boylston Professor of Rhetoric (Kitzhaber 1953). Two years later, Hill, with Eliot’s encouragement, created Harvard’s first English composition course, called English A. Based on the principles he would later outline in his textbook *The Principles of Rhetoric and Their Application* (1878), the two-semester, two-hour course was a requirement for sophomores and existed alongside the traditional four years of instruction in rhetoric (Goggin and Beatty 2000, 43). Graff (1997) notes that the new English composition course replaced the required elocution course, which was then made an elective. Clearly, this is another indication of a changing of the guard from oral discourse to written.

From almost as soon as English composition appeared in the catalogue, Hill lobbied to increase the course to three hours and move it to the first year; however, his efforts were met by fierce resistance by other departments. With the rise of the elective

system under Eliot,<sup>6</sup> departments were loath to give up first year slots as such slots were viewed as critical in attracting students to take upper division courses in a department.

**Table 12**  
**1889 Specimens of Bad English Exam**

**Correct on *this paper* all the errors you discover in the following sentences:**

1. A few years later he began his "Paradise Regained," but which he never finished.
2. While sitting in my room just after lunch, the fire alarm sounded.
3. The character of the agents, or persons, are next to be considered.
4. So honorable a connection might have been expected to have advanced our author's prospects.
5. Sometimes he would lay awake the whole night, trying but unable to make a single line.
6. Milton was too busy to much miss his wife.
7. Everybody had in their recollection the originals of the passages parodied.
8. Dryden neither became Master of Arts or a fellow of the University.
9. He consoles himself with the fancy that he had done a great work.
10. I think we will fall considerably under the mark in computing the poet's income at £600.
11. The Faculty from virtue of its position know thoroughly the needs of the students under them.
12. She confessed to having struck her husband with the axe, and plead self-defence.

Finally, in 1885, Hill, with the help of his assistant Le Baron Briggs,<sup>7</sup> succeeded in moving composition to the first year (Goggin and Beatty 2000, 43). Meanwhile, Eliot

had abolished subject requirements for seniors in 1872, for juniors in 1879, and for sophomores in 1884. The requirements for freshman were reduced in 1885, and further reduced so that only First Year English and a modern language (German or French) were required after 1894 (Butts 1939).

In *Composition in the University*, Crowley (1998) writes that one of Hill's motives in advocating moving composition to the first year was to put additional pressure on the prep schools to expand and improve their English courses. "Could the study [of English Composition] be taken up at the threshold of college life," wrote Hill in 1879, "the schools would be made to feel that their labors in this direction were going to tell upon a pupil's standing in college as well as upon his admission" (Hill, Briggs, and Hurlbutt 1896, 12). Hill described the work done in English A as follows:

During that year two hours a week are given to the study of rhetoric. A text-book is used which aims at familiarizing the pupil with principles that underlie all good composition, as deduced from the best authors and illustrated by examples or warnings from recent works; exercises are written and criticized; and writers noted for clearness, like Macaulay, or for strength of statement and logical coherence, like Burke or Webster, are studied to the extent that time permits. Every Sophomore, moreover, writes six themes on assigned subjects, which are corrected and criticized by the instructor, and are rewritten by the student to the end that he may seize the spirit as well as the letter of the suggestions he has received. The books studied ought to tell on the themes, and they do so tell with faithful students who assimilate what they learn. (Hill, Briggs, and Hurlbutt 1896, 13).

Originally, English A was conceived as a remedial course to bring incoming students' writing skills up to college level. As stated in the Harvard Reports, English A focused on "(1) elementary instruction on the theory and practice of English Composition, and (2) an introduction to the study of English Literature" (Morison 1935, 3). The theory of English composition was delivered via lecture and practice via weekly themes.

### **THE HARVARD REPORTS**

In 1891, nineteen years after Harvard's first written entrance exam, less than a third of the applicants were passing the exam. Clearly, Harvard's desired trickle-up effect—low scores on the exam would cause the prep schools to improve their instruction and thereby produce applicants who were better writers—was not working. Disturbed by this lack of progress, the Harvard Board of Overseers assembled a distinguished committee on Composition and Rhetoric to determine why so many incoming students had deficient writing skills.

As Goggin (2000) observes, what is interesting is that no one on the committee thought to question the exam; instead, it was just assumed the applicants or, more precisely, their prep schools were at fault. However, as Professor Goodwin pointed out in the *Harvard Graduates' Magazine* in 1893, "a similar test [to the Harvard English entrance exam] applied to any other department would disclose a state of things in the lower ranks of scholarship which would be proportionally disreputable. . . . It cannot be doubted that a similar depth of ignorance of Geometry, Algebra, Physics, or History might easily be disclosed" (qtd. in Crowley 1998, 71). Of course, no one expects students in those fields to be proficient in them upon entering college. So why did they



expect proficiency in English? Once again, we can see the influence of the traditional view that

English is too easy to merit study. As the initial Harvard Report states, “[I]t would certainly seem not unreasonable to insist that young men nineteen years of age who present themselves for a college education should be able not only to speak, but to write their mother tongue with ease and correctness” (Adams et al. 1892, 77).

The Committee, drawn from the Board of Overseers to examine the problem, were eminent men in the community: Charles Francis Adams, the grandson of the Harvard’s first Boylston Professor of Rhetoric, Edwin Lawrence Godkin, a former editor of *Nation* and editor of the New York Evening Post during the period of the four reports, and Josiah Quincy, great-grandson of a Harvard President and himself eventual mayor of Boston. After his election as mayor, Quincy was replaced for the next three reports by George R. Nutter, who was President Eliot’s secretary, a law partner of Louis Brandeis, and taught English 12 with Barrett Wendell.

The committee limited its investigation to the three required English courses—“English A” for freshmen, “English B” for sophomores, and “English C” for upperclassmen. After examining some of the papers handed in during freshman year, the committee quickly concluded that students were not properly prepared for college writing, and decided “to begin its work not with the methods of instruction pursued by the College, but with the methods apparently pursued in the preparatory schools which fit students for college” (Adams et al. 1892, 77).

Toward that end, the committee asked that all students in English A submit a paper discussing the methods of writing instruction they received from their secondary

school. They received 450 papers from students who had attended 160 different preparatory schools. The Committee then examined the results of the 1892 entrance examination to confirm their conclusions. The results of the entrance examination showed that 47 percent of the applicants either passed unsatisfactorily or were conditioned. Only 9 applicants, or 2 percent, passed “with credit,” while 20 percent failed completely (Adams et al. 1892, 92).

Not surprisingly, the committee concluded that the present preparatory system of instruction in writing was “radically defective” (96-7). One of the problems, the committee noted, was that most preparatory schools limited their writing instruction to preparing their students for the entrance exam. In an effort to shift the burden of remedial instruction back to the prep schools (the Report noted that English A instructors corrected 6000 essays each half year), the Committee recommended

the College should forthwith, as regards English Composition, be put in its proper place as an institution of advanced education. The work of theme writing ought to be pronounced a part of the elementary training, and as such relegated to the preparatory schools. The student who presents himself for admission to the College, and who cannot write the English language with facility and correctness, should be sent back to the preparatory school to remain there until he can so write it. The College could then, as it should, relieve itself of one of the heaviest burdens now imposed upon it, while those admitted to College would be in position to enter immediately on the studies to which they propose to devote themselves; and if, during the College course, they take English Composition as an elective they should pursue it in its

higher branches, and not, as now, in its most elementary form. (Adams et al. 1892, 96-7)

Of course, this would prove easier said than done. As noted in the epigraph at the beginning of the chapter, the committee realized that higher education had undergone a fundamental shift. With increased class size, the recitation method was no longer effective. Gradually, it was replaced by a system of lectures and written examinations. As a result,

[t]he need of facility in written expression was, of course, correspondingly increased. Without the power of writing his mother tongue readily and legibly a college student was not equipped for the work he had to do. . . . Meanwhile, naturally enough, no similar or corresponding change took place in the system of instruction in vogue in the preparatory schools. They went on in the traditional oral methods. The scholars continued to stand up in class as their fathers had done before them, and what written work they did was almost never incidental, but by and for itself. (Adams et al. 1892, 112-3)

Thus, the committee called for a greater focus on writing instruction at the preparatory level. One of their suggestions was that students be required to translate Greek and Latin into written English. However, interestingly, they were forced to admit that “[n]ow, as forty years ago, the reflex influence on the student’s English of translating Latin or Greek into the mother tongue seems, when subjected to a practical test, to amount to nothing” (Adams et al. 1892, 94). Similarly, in a later report, the committee noted that “the mere reading of books, though good so far as it goes, will no more make a writer than the

looking at masterpieces will make an artist, or the listening to music a composer” (Adams et al. 1897, 120).

The function of the prep school, the report continued, is not to develop potential literary geniuses. Instead, “they should teach facile, clear penmanship, correct spelling, simple grammatical construction, and neat, workmanlike, mechanical execution” (Adams et al. 1897, 123). The authors of the report went on to note that “this is no slight or simple task,” and that it would require “steady, daily drill, and drudgery of a kind most wearisome” (123). Nevertheless, it must be done so that incoming students will be able “to make a plain, clear, simple statement of any matter under consideration, neatly written, correctly spelled, grammatically expressed:—And this is English A” (123). In other words, teach correctness properly and Harvard can then eliminate English A.

Amidst the committee’s fingerpointing at the prep schools, what went unnoticed or, at least, unremarked upon, was that whether or not prior writing instruction had an effect on those who did pass. Based on the reports of those who passed the exam, it did not (Goggin 2000). Interestingly, just as no one on the Committee thought to question the validity of the entrance exam, no one at Harvard seemed to question the efficacy of English A. That is, until William Lyon Phelps—who as a graduate student was a teaching assistant to Harvard’s Barrett Wendell, one of the major architects of Harvard’s composition program and originator of the daily theme—left Harvard to teach at Yale.

In his autobiography, Phelps described the plight of those who had to grade the papers generated in English composition during the late 80s and early 90s:

The only subject required of Harvard undergraduates was the writing of compositions; this was required of every Freshman, every Sophomore, and at

least for part of the year, of every Junior. The result was that a large number of men on the faculty spent nearly all their time and energy in reading and correcting these themes.

Professor Wendell gave the course, where the men wrote long themes for him every two weeks and a one-page theme every day. My job was to read the dailies.

During the entire academic year at Harvard, I read more than eight hundred themes every week; I read all day and a good part of the night. Once I was sick for two days, and a substitute read for me, because even one day's lapse made it impossible to keep up. (qtd. in Goggin 2000, 26)

While he was teaching at Harvard, Phelps noted, he believed the system of first year composition worked. But twenty years later, his experiences at Yale, where there was no entrance examination and no composition courses, had convinced him otherwise. "On the subject of required English Composition," he wrote, "I am a stout, unabashed and thorough skeptic" (Phelps 1912, 287).<sup>8</sup> His conversion resulted from the epiphany he experienced upon taking home his first set of Yale compositions from his Introduction to Literature class to grade:

When I took home the first batch, I said: "Now for trouble. These young men have never had instruction in English composition, and have never passed through the valuable drill to freshman year given in other colleges." But, to my unspeakable amazement, their compositions were just as good technically as those written by Harvard sophomores! It was a tremendous

surprise, for the writers were not, as a class, one whit more advanced mentally than their Harvard brothers. (289)

### **THE 1892 NCTE COMMITTEE OF TEN**

The entrance examination in English spread rapidly among colleges. However, a problem soon arose—lack of uniformity regarding the required authors and texts. In 1879, representatives from New England colleges met to discuss the problem. President Eliot suggested an examination board. His call and others would eventually lead to the establishment of the Committee of Ten in 1892 to address the issue of a standard curriculum for secondary schools.

The lack of uniformity in college entrance requirements was not limited to English and created numerous problems for college administrators. As a result, in 1892 the National Council of Education of the National Education Association called for the appointment of a special Committee of Ten to examine subject-area preparation at the secondary school level and establish a standard curriculum. Harvard's President Eliot was appointed chair.

The Committee decided to hold conferences on nine subject-areas, including English, and appointed commissions of ten for each subject-area. The conference on English met at Vassar and was chaired by Samuel Thurber, master at Girls' High School, with George Lyman Kittredge (Child's successor at Harvard) serving as secretary. Their report opened with a statement on the purpose of English studies:

The main objects of teaching English in schools seem to be two (1) to enable the pupil to understand the expressed thoughts of others and to give expression to thoughts of his own; and (2) to cultivate a taste for reading, to

give the pupil some acquaintance with good literature, and to furnish him with the means of extending that acquaintance. (qtd. in Applebee 1974, 33)

The commission recommended five periods of English a week for all four years of secondary school. Although the Committee reduced that figure somewhat, English was the only subject recommended for every student for all four years of secondary school regardless of whether the student intended to go to college or a scientific school (33).

The commission agreed the college entrance examination in English “should be made uniform *in kind* [rather than uniform in amount] throughout the country” (Hays 1936, 25). In addition, they made the following recommendations for the exam:

- 1) That it require the reading of certain masterpieces of English literature.
- 2) That the list of prescribed books should represent the developments in English literature from the Elizabethan period to the present.
- 3) Some of these texts should be read in class under the direction of a teacher and some outside of class on the student’s own.
- 4) Teachers should prepare study questions for the required books and test the student’s knowledge via written exam, oral reports, and classroom discussion of those books studied in class.
- 5) Instead of a literary essay designed to show the student’s ability to write, entrance exam essays should be focused on demonstrating the student’s
  - (a) knowledge on topics such as literary history or criticism, and
  - (b) ability to organize that knowledge and write clearly.

- 6) They discouraged the use of exercises in which the student corrected specimens of bad English.
- 7) The criteria for admission in English should depend on the student's ability to write as demonstrated by his performance in exams in other subjects.
- 8) They noted that rhetoric could be taught as an aid to composition, but that it would not be tested for on the entrance exam.
- 9) English should be a "final" subject.
- 10) No student should be admitted to college who, according to his entrance exam, is very deficient in his ability to write good English (Hays 1936).

The Committee of Ten's report not only solidified English as a four-year secondary school subject but also secured its continued inclusion on college entrance exams.

#### **THE ADOPTION OF ENGLISH COMPOSITION**

Despite the criticism it received from Phelps and others, the Harvard model quickly caught on with other colleges. Rollo Brown (1926) suggests one reason for its rapid and widespread adoption:

Harvard, with an honorable past, attracted many men who expected to do college teaching. These men, when they went to their posts all over the country carried with them, as every college graduate must, some memory of the way things were done by their Alma Mater. And when these newer institutions sought a means of preventing students from disgracing themselves ever time they put pen to paper, they almost invariably made use of Harvard's experience and established prescribed freshman courses in writing. (30-1)



The Committee on Ten and the Harvard Reports were other factors in English composition's sudden adoption. As Payne (1895) pointed out:

The Report of that Conference [the Committee of Ten] and the Harvard Report on Composition and Rhetoric, made public a year or so earlier, are responsible for much of the recent awakening of interest in the subject of English instruction. In fact, the Harvard Report may be said to have given to the reform movement its strongest impulse, and made a "burning question of the day" out of a matter previously little more than academic in its interest.

(12)

Actually, Payne would have been accurate to state that English composition was a matter previously of little academic interest as well prior to 1870. However, by the turn of the century, English composition was firmly entrenched in the curriculum.

### **THE DECLINE OF RHETORIC**

The rise of English composition during the last thirty years of the nineteenth century is inevitably tied to the decline of rhetoric. One indication of just how far rhetoric had fell is the survey Fred Newton Scott conducted among college teachers of English in 1901. Scott, then president of the pedagogical section of the Modern Language Association, polled 63 English professors around the country on the following three questions:

1. Is Rhetoric, in your opinion, a proper study for graduate work?
2. If so, what is the proper aim, what is the scope, and what are the leading Problems of Rhetoric as a graduate study?
3. If Rhetoric, in your opinion should not be admitted to the list of

graduate studies, what do you regard as the strongest reason for excluding it? (Mead 1901, 187)

The very nature of the questions, along with the fact that the teachers are referred to as English teachers, illustrates rhetoric's fall from grace in the modern research university. Certainly, it is hard to envision a similar survey regarding rhetoric and undergraduate study in the classical college.

Just as undergraduate study was the focus of the classical college, graduate study was the focus of the modern research university. If a discipline didn't merit graduate study, it was a second-class discipline at best. While most respondents agreed rhetoric had a legitimate place in graduate studies (these were, after all, English teachers), there was little agreement on how to define rhetoric or why it should be studied. Part of the problem was the dissensus on whether rhetoric was an art or a science. Such confusion did not bode well for rhetoric given the scientific orientation of the research university. And part of the problem was distinguishing rhetoric from composition. One respondent gave the survey to sixteen students in his English composition class. "Of these writers," Mead (1901) wrote, "every one discussed the main question as if Rhetoric were to be understood to mean English Composition as a whole or in part. Not one seriously considered the possibility of making Rhetoric a study by itself" (193).

In 1903 the MLA disbanded its pedagogical section. This was devastating to rhetoric as the pedagogical section was the only section that regularly dealt with rhetoric. And, as Goggin (2000) notes, by 1910 MLA had "limited its definition of disciplinary practices exclusively to literary scholarship" (22). As far as the modern research university was concerned, rhetoric, the heart of the classical curriculum as conceived by

the Greeks and Romans, was dead. All that was left was its shrunken shadow current-traditional rhetoric, better known as English composition.

#### **ENGLISH STUDIES AT HARVARD (ADAMS SHERMAN HILL)**

Most modern histories of rhetoric and composition blame Hill for the advent of current-traditional rhetoric. As Paine (1999) observes, Hill is portrayed as “the emblem for almost everything *wrong* in writing instruction” (86), i.e., correctness or current-traditional rhetoric. Paine agrees “that Hill, his textbooks, and followers indeed left an impoverishing legacy to the teaching of writing and to teachers of writing. However,” he adds, “I find that deeper and more thorough consideration of his biography and the assumptions of his culture renders a somewhat different, and perhaps more sympathetic, representation of his motives” (87).

Hill’s underlying motive for composition instruction, Paine argues, was not to prepare his students to fit in with capitalist society but to enable them to resist popular culture and to prepare them for civic virtue:

[T]he composition course, for Hill, was not intended to prepare students to fit in with, for instance, the new “managerial capitalism,” but was to oppose a pernicious popular culture that had seized control over the nation’s reading material—and thus the citizenry’s reading habits. Sound rhetorical training, thought Hill, might endow students with the resistance they needed to oppose an all-too-enticing culture of the newspaper and the dime novel. (128)

A former journalist with the New York *Tribune*, Hill was acutely aware of the power of popular culture and despised it. His own reputation had been besmirched by Horace Greeley and the news-broker Daniel Craig. Like many patrician intellectuals of

the day, Hill opposed the anti-intellectual sentiment of popular culture. Indeed, Paine (1999) argues that Hill's criticism of the popular forms of discourse such as newspapers and dime novels may well have been one of the reasons Eliot hired him: to raise the standard of professional discourse.

Cmiel (1990) notes that nineteenth century American attitudes towards linguistic correctness were conflicted. On the one hand, advocates of "pure English" such as Hill associated correctness with refinement and learning. On the other hand, popular culture worked at cross purposes with "pure English." In an 1887 essay in *Scribner's* magazine, Hill writes that

of English an educated man should know more than the rudiments, because— if for no other reason—everybody knows, or half-knows, or thinks he knows them; because everybody deems himself capable, not only of criticising the English of others, but also of writing good English himself. Therefore, educated men should know enough to be able to protect pure English against the numerous foes that beset it on every side in these days of free speech and a free press. (qtd. in Crowley 1998, 62)

Here we see both aspects of Hill's concern for correctness. One, it is important to distinguish yourself from those who do not know correct English. And two, English needs to be protected from the degrading influence of the popular press. Paine (1999) writes that Hill believed that

[y]oung writers must not only be given the *ability* to write well, but must also be endowed with what Hill calls "moral stamina." Moral stamina is necessary to resist the temptation to allow one's writing to suffer from a kind

of disintegration—and disintegration of language was intimately connected, for Hill, to the disintegration of "individuality," of the self. When writers fail to put "their real selves behind the pen," they become *not* themselves, but products of their culture, spouting forth the empty-headed clichés of an empty-headed culture. (135)

Furthermore, for Hill and other nineteenth century compositionists,

the ability to write well involved more than erecting a facade of language, but signified something much more fundamental and much more important. Good, coherent, moral writing signified a "good," "coherent," "moral" "self" behind the pen. Thus, Hill insists—he seems, in fact, obsessed with the point—that the writing teacher must allow writers to offer forth their *true* selves, not some imposter self that serves merely as the "beast of burden of other men's thoughts." (135)

In essence, Hill believed correctness was a defensive strategy of resistance. Still, there is no denying that regardless of Hill's motives, the result of his Harvard Composition program was the institutionalization of current-traditional rhetoric.

Rhetoric, according to Hill (1878), was "an art, not a science: for it neither observes, nor discovers, nor classifies; but it shows how to convey from one mind to another the results of observation, discovery, or classification; it uses knowledge, not as knowledge but as power" (iii). As constructed by Hill, rhetoric did not fit the ideals of the modern research university. Instead, he viewed rhetoric as merely a means of communicating, rather than creating knowledge. In *The Principles of Rhetoric and Their Application* (1878), he wrote that "[r]hetoric applies to any subject-matter that can be

treated in words, but has no subject-matter peculiar to itself. It does not undertake to furnish a person with something to say; but it does undertake to tell him how best to say that with which he has provided himself" (iv).

Unfortunately for rhetoric, Hill's construction, or rather, reduction, of it won the day. However, by institutionalizing English composition, Hill succeeded in securing a space, albeit a limited one,<sup>9</sup> for English studies in the curriculum of the modern research university.

### **COMPOSITION AS REMNANT OF THE CLASSICAL COLLEGE**

As noted earlier, the second irony associated with the institutionalization of English composition is that it would become the repository for the ideals of the classical college (of which it had never been a part). The classical college's twin goals of culture and cultivation live on in English studies. While English literature would inherit the role of transmitting culture, English composition maintained the role of cultivating the student's moral development.

Crowley (1998) writes that English composition is the one subject in the modern research university where the "moral surveillance on students" practiced in the classical college still exists. Just as "[r]hetoric teachers in classical colleges felt no compunction about evaluating the quality of the moral of civic sentiments expressed by their students." Crowley (1998) notes, "late-nineteenth-century English professors also felt entitled to comment on students' character and opinions as, they supposed, these were manifested in their compositions" (57).

While Crowley asserts that today's composition instructors are "squeamish about this feature of composition instruction" and "reluctant to perform this task" (57- 8), I

disagree. The current emphasis in English composition classrooms on cultural studies or the 90s focus on Freirean pedagogy both, it seems to me, tend to invite instructor judgment on students' character as manifested in their essays. Thus, as we begin the twenty-first century, English composition, still carries with it the DNA of the classical American college of the seventeenth century.

## CHAPTER TEN

# LITERATURE OR WHAT TO DO WITH THE OTHER 95%

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*[It is] as much as you can hope for [if 5 percent of the students under the professor's tutelage] pursue courses of study which would make the investigations which you are pursuing with great interest and value to science valuable to them directly. . . . Now what are you going to do with the other 95 percent?*

—E.H. Magill

### OBSTACLES TO ENGLISH LITERATURE

Like the study of English language, English literature was viewed in the classical college as mere social accomplishment. Given this perception, it isn't surprising that the one place where English was a major part of the curriculum was at finishing schools for girls. The study of English literature was seen as a feminine preoccupation (see Applebee 1974; Graff 1987; Palmer 1965) in both England and America. In his introductory lecture as Professor of English at Queen's College for Women, Charles Kingsley explained how the study of English literature equipped women for their role in life: "Such a course of history would quicken women's inborn personal interest in the actors of this life drama, and be quickened by it in return, as indeed it ought: for it is thus that God intended women to look instinctively at the world" (qtd. in Palmer 1965, 38). The characterization of English as feminine, as a second-class subject for those unable to handle the rigors of classical studies was a hurdle English literature would have to overcome to win a spot in the curriculum. Recognizing the second-class stigma attached to English, some women's colleges, such as Vassar, Smith, and Wellesley



purposefully adopted the classical curriculum to demonstrate that women could handle the same rigorous subjects as men (Graff 1987).

Even when the study of modern languages such as English finally began to make headway against the classical curriculum in the preparatory academies along with math, science, and other modern languages, English literature lagged behind. “The trouble,” wrote Carpenter (1914) in his chapter on The Mother Tongue, “lay not so much in the lack of desire for instruction as in the general feeling that there was no great body of instruction to give” (45). E.A. Freeman raised a similar sentiment in regards to the adoption of English literature as separate from language at Oxford. “What was meant by distinguishing literature from language,” asked Freeman, “if by literature was intended the study of great books, and not mere chatter about Shelley?” (qtd. in Palmer 1965, 96).

Imaginative literature, in particular, was viewed with suspicion in the classical college. While history, biography, or travel books were more acceptable because they were perceived as being based upon the “truth,” fiction and drama were suspect because they appealed to the imagination. In 1893 the *New England Journal of Education* applauded students who refused to read *Hamlet*, despite it appearing on the college entrance list for over a decade:

All honor to the modest and sensible youths and maidens of the Oakland High School who revolted against studying an unexpurgated edition of Hamlet! The indelicacies of Shakespeare in the complete edition are brutal. They are more than indelicacies, they are indecencies. (qtd. in Applebee 1974, 22)

In a similar vein, Horace Mann’s comment that novels should not be taught because they appealed to the emotions rather than reason typified the view of many educators

(Applebee 1974). In 1895 William Lyons Phelps scheduled a course in "Modern Novels" at Yale and sparked a controversy: Phelps (1939) describes the events in his

*Autobiography:*

One day in the Spring of 1895 I called on Professor Beers and told him that I should like to give a course on Modern Novels, confining the subject-matter entirely to contemporary works. Rather to my surprise and greatly to my pleasure, he gave his immediate assent to this, saying there was no reason why the literature of 1895 could not be made as suitable a subject for college study as the literature of 1295.

Thus was inaugurated what I believe was the first course in any university in the world confined wholly to contemporary fiction. I called the course *Modern Novels*. It was open to Seniors and Juniors, and was elected by two hundred and fifty men. . . .

When I gave the first lecture in the Autumn, I hoped the course would attract no attention outside of the academic halls; for in those days, newspaper notoriety was often fatal to a university career. It is hard to say just how this publicity began, for I gave out no interviews, nor did I mention the subject anywhere; but a notice in the New Haven newspapers was quickly followed by a whole column in the New York Times, and it seemed as if every newspaper in the country followed suit. . . .

Although the undergraduates apparently enjoyed both the course and the writing of the weekly critical theme, which I made obligatory, and although the newspaper comment was on the whole highly favorable, the majority of

the older professors gave me to understand that unless I dropped the course at the end of its first year, I should myself be dropped from the faculty. . . . Then the Dean of the college, Henry P. Wright, sent for me and made the following remark: "If your course had been a failure there would have been no objection to its continuance." (297-8, 301)

Following the advice of Yale's President Timothy Dwight, Phelps quietly dropped plans for offering the course the following year. Subsequently, Phelps reports: "My term as Instructor expired with the Novel course; and the Professors, perhaps relenting, perhaps pleased with my determination to avoid publicity connected with the withdrawal of the course, promoted me to an Assistant Professorship for five years" (302). Phelps's tale is interesting in three regards. One, although the course generated controversy with the general public, the overall attitude was favorable. Two, the course definitely was popular with the students, as it attracted two hundred and fifty to enroll. And three, it was the older generation of Professors rather than the administration which objected to the course.<sup>1</sup>

Graff (1987) writes that what little teaching there was of English literature in the classical college treated literature in an instrumental and mechanical way, neglecting the literary qualities of the work. Classicists believed literature was self-interpreting and therefore, did not require instruction. Thus, English literature had four marks against it in the classical college: (1) it was English, (2) it was seen as feminine (3) it might be immoral, and (4) it was self-interpreting.

As we saw in the previous chapter, the first objection gradually gave way with the introduction of the study of Anglo-Saxon language, which entailed the study of Beowulf

and other Anglo-Saxon works. Before long, philologists such as March were using English literature as the texts for their philological study. March's famous textbook *Method of Philological Study of the English Language* featured *Pilgrim's Progress*, *Julius Caesar*, *Paradise Lost*, and other works of English Literature. Similarly, the second objection—English literature was a feminine study—was basically overcome via philology. Advocates of modern language and literature used the perception that philology was both masculine and scientific to legitimize all of English studies. As Applebee (1974) rightly observes, “the prestige of philology served to *justify* English studies without necessarily *limiting* them” (28). The third objection—immorality—would be overcome first by the rise of Romanticism and then by the elevation of culture as a sort of secular religion.

### ROMANTICISM

One of the initial obstacles to the teaching of English literature in the classical college was the belief among conservative Christians that imaginative literature posed a threat to a student's moral well-being. While histories, biographies, and travel books were accepted in the curriculum since they were based on the truth, imaginative literature was viewed with suspicion because it appealed not to truth but to the imagination. However, the rise of Romanticism in the first two decades of the nineteenth century provided justification for the teaching of literature as a means of transmitting cultural values (Palmer 1965; Applebee 1974).

The Romantics championed the imagination as both a criticism and corrective to the unbridled rationalism of industrialization. By investing the artistic imagination with an authority superior to reason, the Romantics elevated literature as the container of

cultural and moral values. The notion that culture is a product of the arts originated with Coleridge, writes Applebee (1974), and is a consistent theme of the Romantics.

In his preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth (1800) warned that the modern industrialized society desensitizes humans and appeals to the lowest sentiments of human nature:

For a multitude of causes, unknown to former times, are now acting with a combined force to blunt the discriminating powers of the mind, and unfitting it for all voluntary exertion to reduce it to a state of almost savage torpor. The most effective of these causes are the great national events which are daily taking place, and the increasing accumulation of men in cities, where the uniformity of their occupations produces a craving for the extraordinary incident, which the rapid communication of intelligence hourly gratifies.

(165)

The poet, however, writes Wordsworth, attempts to counteract these forces by acting as society's moral compass:

He is the rock of defense of human nature; an upholder and preserver, carrying everywhere with him relationship and love. In spite of difference of soil and climate, of language and manners, of laws and customs, in spite of things silently gone out of mind and things violently destroyed, the poet binds together by passion and knowledge the vast empire of human society, as it is spread over the whole earth, and over all time. (171)

Similarly, in *A Defence of Poetry*, Shelley (1821) asserted that the imagination encourages morality and, using a simile often employed by defenders of the classical college and mental discipline, wrote that poetry strengthens humans' moral faculty:

The whole objection, however, of the immorality of poetry rests upon a misconception of the manner in which poetry acts to produce the moral improvement of man. . . . The great instrument of moral good is the imagination and poetry administers to the effect by acting upon the cause. . . . Poetry strengthens that faculty which is the organ of the moral nature of man, in the same manner as exercise strengthens a limb. (786, 787)

#### **MAKING A RELIGION OF CULTURE**

The declining authority of religion and class together with the violence of the French Revolution left many Europeans searching for a new glue to hold together the social compact. In late 18<sup>th</sup> century Germany, the search led Johan Gottfried Herder to popularize the term “Bildung” as a way of describing the organic growth of individuals and cultures. Later, the Weimar Classicists of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries—Goethe, Schiller, and Humboldt—applied the concept of *Bildung* to literature, resulting in the *Bildungsroman* (Kontje 1993).

Karl Morgenstern, a professor of rhetoric and classical philology in Dorpat, coined the term “Bildungsroman” as early as 1803 and would later publish three essays on the topic (Martini 1991). In his essay of 1824, Morgenstern described the two types of *Bildung* promoted by the *Bildungsroman*. “We said that we may call it the *Bildungsroman*, first and foremost because of its content, because it depicts the Bildung of the hero from its beginning to a certain stage of completion; and also secondly,

because through this depiction it promotes the *Bildung* of the reader more fully than any other type of novel” (Kontje 1991, 16).<sup>2</sup> Goethe and his contemporaries believed that individual *Bildung* would eventually lead to societal *Bildung*. Writing in the aftermath of the French Revolution, the Weimar Classicists—who were, after all, aristocrats—were understandably fearful of the potential violence of political upheaval. They believed that *Bildung* would bring about a peaceful, organic societal transformation. Schiller wrote that *Bildung* through art made revolution unnecessary, that the refinement of the individual will naturally be reflected in the state (Kontje 1991). It was toward this end that Humboldt reformed the university system.

In nineteenth century England, Matthew Arnold espoused a similar role for culture as a means of preventing anarchy and promoting social harmony. After graduating college and serving as a private secretary to Lord Landsdowne, Arnold, an aspiring poet and critic, earned his living as an Inspector of Schools, covering the dissenting academies. His work as School Inspector provided him firsthand knowledge of the state of education in England and abroad. Concerned by the state of English education and English society, he wrote a series of six articles that were published in 1867 and 68 in *Cornhill Magazine* (Lipman 1994).

The first article was entitled “Culture and Its Enemies,” the other five appeared under the title “Anarchy and Authority.” When he published them together as a book, Arnold conflated the title to *Culture and Anarchy* (1869). Like the Weimar Classicists, Arnold was fearful of anarchy if the people were free to do whatever they liked without a governing authority such as religion or class to check their baser instincts. Arnold (1869) believed culture offered not only personal *Bildung* but a means of preserving societal

order: "Through culture seems to lie our way, not only to perfection, but even to safety" (134). With the dawning of the modern age of science, individualism, and democracy, the old authorities of religion and class lost their puissance. In their place, Arnold (1869) proposed culture as the authority for modern society:

And when, therefore, anarchy presents itself as a danger to us, we know not where to turn. . . . We want an authority, and we find nothing but jealous classes, checks, and a dead-lock; culture suggests the idea of *the State*. We can find no basis for a firm State-power in our ordinary selves; culture suggests one in our *best self*. (64-5)

Arnold defined culture as "the study and pursuit of perfection" and the character of perfection as "sweetness and light," or, less poetically, "beauty and intelligence" (97). Dismayed by the divisiveness he found in modern England, Arnold called for an education focusing on a common culture as a unifying agent for society.

Arnold identified two major sources of human development that he termed "Hebraism" and "Hellenism." Arnold believed humans needed both forces to achieve perfection; however, he believed there currently was too much on "Hebraism", or "strictness of conscience," and not enough on "Hellenism" or "*spontaneity of consciousness*" (97). The Puritan emphasis on obedience to God's law, Arnold believed, had come at the expense of the Greek emphasis on beauty and intelligence. As a result, education needed to refocus and place a greater emphasis on Hellenism.

By teaching a common culture,<sup>3</sup> consisting of "the best which has been thought and said in the world" (5), Arnold (1869) believed the skepticism and self-interest of the modern age could be overcome. Like the defenders of mental discipline, Arnold



advocated a classical education. Ironically, however, in America, his call for culture was appropriated by advocates of English as the classical languages were already in decline by 1869.

Arnold's most influential supporter in America was Horace E. Scudder, a Cambridge school board member and editor of the *Atlantic Monthly* from 1890 to 1898. In Arnoldian terms, Scudder championed literature's role in "spiritualizing life, letting light into the mind, inspiring and feeding the higher forces of human nature" (qtd. in Applebee 1974, 24). Scudder believed literature's cultural role was particularly important in a democracy such as America's: "Now, in a democracy more signally than under any other form of national organization, it is vitally necessary that there should be an unceasing, unimpeded circulation of the spiritual life of the people . . . in literature, above all, is this spirit enshrined" (qtd. in Adams 1993, 17).

Unlike Arnold, Scudder was a proponent of the vernacular. His view of the cultural role of literature and the noble mission of the teachers of English, writes Applebee (1974), was accepted by most teachers by the end of the century. Thus, concludes Applebee, the teacher of literature "could for the first time claim the full support of the ethical tradition for all of his teaching of literature" (24).

Similarly, Crowley (1998) observes, that ethical instruction changed "its guise and its habitation" (33) during the middle of the nineteenth century, as the study of rhetoric with its traditional emphasis on ethics waned and was replaced by the aesthetics of taste. Nevertheless, as Crowley points out, ethical study did not disappear along with rhetoric but merely shifted its guise to the study of English literature, albeit with one important difference. While classical rhetoric sought to develop the *vir bonus*—the good

man speaking well—the new aesthetic approach to literature aimed at producing the genteel man of taste, who, Crowley asserts, is taught how to distinguish himself from the uneducated (lower class) as well as from the upper class.

Shumway (1994) agrees that a college education had long been a way of distinguishing a person's class status. With the fall of the classical languages, knowledge of English literature became important became “a significant form of class distinction, and by teaching it [English literature] the project of unifying the professional-managerial class with the bourgeoisie could be furthered as the appropriate sense of taste and cultural decorum were inculcated. The point was not to create literati . . . but rather individuals who identified with the culture of the elite” (36).

#### **LANGUAGE NOT LITERATURE**

As Irving Babbit observed in 1908, philology was a “strangely elastic” term (qtd. in Myers 1996, 23). During the last third of the nineteenth century, philology began to split into two camps. The first and older view conceived of philology as a broad study of culture, and examining and contextualizing a culture's literature was one of the primary means of achieving that understanding. In his address at the annual meeting of the Modern Language Association in 1897, Cook eloquently describes this view:

The function of a philologist, then, is the endeavor to relive the life of the past; to enter by the imagination into the spiritual experiences of all the historic protagonists of civilization in a given period and area of culture; to think the thoughts, to feel the emotions, to partake the aspirations, recorded in literature; to become one with humanity in the struggles of a given nation or race to perceive and attain the ideal of existence; and then to judge rightly

these various disclosures of the human spirit, and to reveal to the world their true significance and relative importance. (Cook 1898, 195)

Later in the same address Cook states, “The ideal philologist is at once antiquary, palæographer, grammarian, lexicologist, expounder, critic, historian of literature, and above all, lover of humanity” (196). Obviously, such study requires a generalist. But the modern research university and its disciplines called for specialists. Comparative philology, the second and much narrower view, would prove a much better fit with the modern university.

Comparative philology sought to study linguistic changes among various languages. Its only interest in literature was as a linguistic phenomenon, which could be explained scientifically. Cook and others who favored the broad view, complained that philology should not be so narrowly constructed: “Philology is frequently considered to be identical with linguistics. This is an error which can not be sufficiently deprecated. It results in the estrangement of the study of language from that of literature, with which, in the interests of both, it should be most intimately associated” (200). But the truth of the matter was that few philologists could combine the systematic research and scholarship necessary for comparative philology with the creative synthesis required for classical philology. In an age of science and specialization, it isn’t surprising that most philologists embraced comparative philology. Indeed, as Graff (1987) notes, by the end of the nineteenth century, calls for a broader philology such as Cook’s 1897 address were largely ritualistic.

Certainly, the name chosen for the discipline’s first professional organization in 1883 left little doubt as to its focus: the Modern Language Association (MLA). Marshall

Elliot, an assistant professor of modern languages, sent letters out to fellow philologists, hoping to establish an organization to promote the study of modern languages as a science. As Warner (1985) notes, “The MLA, then, was not primarily, either in intent or in membership, a literary organization” (2). Instead, they had two primary goals: promote the study of modern languages, and to professionalize to gain control over that study. Elliott outlined these goals in his address to the first meeting:

First of all, we must have better teachers. None but trained teachers should be appointed to positions for giving instruction in Modern Languages. Here, as in other departments of learning, the demands of the Institutions should be such that no one, except a man of scientific training, could enter the profession, and in this way, the incompetent would naturally be shut out, and the departments would rise in the esteem and consideration of the public.

(qtd. in Warner 1985, 3)

But it was H.C.G. Brandt (1884), a professor of German, who, at that same meeting in 1883, best captured the problem facing the teachers of the modern languages:

In short, the feeling is, *any body* can teach French or German or what is just as dangerous, *any body* can teach English. By introducing scientific methods, we shall show before very long that every body cannot so teach, that the teacher must be specially trained for his work in our department as in any other. (60)

This concern for scientifically justifying the modern languages is understandable given the philological training of the teachers involved and the rise of the modern university. In addition, as Warner (1985) points out, these philologists “had in most cases begun their

academic careers with little or no interest in teaching literature” (2). Understandably, linguistics and the German graduate model appealed to a new generation of professors who planned on making a living in the academy.

#### **CALLS FOR LITERARY STUDY**

Gradually, however, some philologists began to call for the expansion of philology—as, in practice, essentially all philology in the U.S. was comparative philology—into literary studies. In 1884 James Morgan Hart argued that more time needed to be set aside for the study of English literature. Hart noted that less than two hours per week for two years was the customary quota for English literature. He suggested three hours for three years. He also wanted to clarify the role of the English literature instructor: “There are still too many persons of influence and culture who persist in looking upon the instructor of English literature as necessarily the instructor of rhetoric. I am unable to share this opinion” (Hart 1884, 85). Hart noted that if rhetoric were to be taught at all in college, it should be taught by the professor of philosophy. How should English literature be taught? According to Hart, by studying various literary periods.

Th. W. Hunt also called for greater literary study, noting that literature was more than mere social accomplishment and therefore called for more serious study:

The current errors, that English literature is a subject for the desultory reader in his leisure hours rather than an intellectual study for serious workers; that it ranks as an accomplishment only, and that the terms literary and philosophic, are mutually exclusive, are errors that have been strengthened by the superficial methods on which the subject has been taught in most of our

institutions. The enlargement of the collegiate course in English will correct all this. It will substitute the disciplinary for the aesthetic method and give true literary inspiration rank above mere verbal finish. (Hunt 1885, 126)

Still, Warner (1985) writes that most philologists viewed literary texts merely as a pedagogical tool and resisted expanding into literature. Some, like Basil Gildersleeve, the first professor appointed at Johns Hopkins and the founder of the *American Journal of Philology*, objected to literary study because it wasn't scientific. Gildersleeve identified the two approaches to the study of literary texts. The first approach, taken by the *littérateurs*, was simply interested in "aesthetic charm." The second approach, taken by true philologists, utilized what Gildersleeve termed "historico-philological science" to study the works of man. The *littérateurs*, according to Gildersleeve, were mere florists; the philologists were botanists (Myers 1996). For linguists like Gildersleeve, literary texts were important only as they recorded how language changed over time. The literariness of a text was irrelevant. Indeed, literature merely meant a written text.

However, philologists soon learned that students, particularly undergraduate students were not that interested in philological study. As Magill (1893) noted in his 1892 address to the MLA convention, a scholar was lucky if 5% of his students share an interest in the sort of philological study he did. The real question was what do you do with the other 95%. The answer, as it turned out, was literature.

#### **MAKING ENGLISH LITERATURE STRANGE**

Still, a final hurdle remained before the study of English literature was accepted into the curriculum—if literature is self-interpreting, then what is there to study?

Just as the English language was made to seem more difficult by the introduction of Anglo-Saxon and philology, English literature needed to be redefined so as to be appropriate for academic study. “Aesthetic charm,” as Gildersleeve noted, “was beside the question” (qtd. in Myers 1996, 26). Warner (1985) writes that conflict arose between supporters of philological scholarship and literary culture as to which was the proper means of approaching literary study. From this conflict, argues Warner, emerged professional criticism. However, he notes, the profession had to redefine what was meant by literary before its study could be justified: “[I]n important ways,” Warner (1985) writes, “critical labor—what the critic does, his work and the acceptable forms of his work—did not follow from the literary so much as it reinvented the literary” (2).

The term “literature” itself had undergone significant change over the course of the nineteenth century. As Williams (1977) notes, in the seventeenth century, literary meant literate. Through the 1880s, the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) defined literature as an “acquaintance with ‘letters’ or books; polite or humane learning; literary culture.” According to the OED, it was only in the latter half of the nineteenth century that literature assumed the more restricted meaning we associate with it today, i.e., “writing which has claim to consideration on the grounds of beauty of form or emotional effect.”

Sampson (1895) wrote that in order for literary study to be accepted, its practitioners must disprove Freeman’s remark that “English literature is only chatter about Shelley.” Toward that end, he recommended that they must emphasize “that the study of literature means the study of literature, not of biography nor of literary history (incidentally of vast importance), not of grammar, not of etymology, not of anything

except the works themselves, viewed as their creators wrote them, viewed as art, as transcripts of humanity,—not as logic, not as psychology, not as ethics” (79). Thus, practitioners redefined literature as a special kind of text requiring scholarly interpretation. “Literature [re]conceived in this way,” writes Crowley (1998), “offered teachers of English a body of materials to study at the same time as it justified that study on aesthetic and moral grounds” (80).

### **WHO SHOULD TEACH LITERATURE AND HOW SHOULD IT BE TAUGHT?**

As literature began to infiltrate the curriculum, two questions arose: who should teach it and how should it be taught. Graff (1987) examines the ongoing conflict over these questions in detail in *Professing Literature*. The initial conflict was between supporters of the liberal culture ideal and modern language scholars or generalists versus philologists, if you will. The generalists note that philology was often insensitive to the significance of literature. They like to relate the story from a philology class at Radcliffe. The professor followed the usual method of analyzing the etymology of the words of the text. “Whenever he came to one of the words which he could derive he would trace its pedigree. The young women at first had a tendency to stop idly at a hard passage in the text and ask, ‘What does that mean, Sir?’ But the philologist sternly rebuked them and replied, ‘Mean! It means what it says!’” (qtd. in Warner 1985, 5-6). From the generalist perspective, the story illustrates that philological pedagogy was incapable of properly studying literature. As Warner points out, however, the question “What does it mean?” is irrelevant to the philologist because from his perspective anyone could decipher its meaning. His study, on the other hand, required the training of a specialist (Warner 1985).



The generalists, as Graff (1987) notes, “tended to dispense with elaborate pedagogical theories and methods in the effort, as they saw it, to let the great masterpieces of literature teach themselves” (86). Hiram Corson, chairman of the Cornell English department in the 1890s is an extreme example of this point of view. Corson, a philologist by training, denounced philology in *The Aims of Literary Study* (1895) writing that philological approach to literature resulted in analysis that led nowhere. In *The Voice and Spiritual Education* (1896), he wrote that accessing the spiritual essence of a literary work was the object of literary study and that the only method for doing so was via oral performance. Hence, Corson “thundered Shakespeare to his classes” (qtd. in Graff 1987, 48), sometimes accompanied by an organ.

Often departments were divided in their approach to literature. Thomas, a German professor from Columbia, aptly described the situation at the 1896 MLA meeting:

On the one side are the men of letters and those whom they inspire, looking a little disdainfully upon the patient plodding, the extreme circumspection, of the philologists, and teaching by example that the important thing in dealing with literature is, as M. Tissot expresses it, “to talk well rather than to think well.” Their ideal of the literary discourse tends toward the elegant causerie, which is apt to be interesting but not true.

And on the other side are the philologists, who

Feel that what the literary men say consists pretty largely of cunningly-phrased guess-work, superficiality and personal bias. For their part they wish their work to rest on good foundations. It is the solidity of the fabric, not its

beauty, that they care for. Thus, they are tempted as a class (for every class has its besetting danger) to undervalue form and to confine themselves to somewhat mechanical investigations, such as promise definite, exact and unassailable results. They are suspicious of the larger and more subtle questions of literature; and so their ideal gravitates in the direction of the amorphous *Abhandlung* which is apt to be true but not interesting. (qtd. in Graff 1987, 94-5)

Graff (1987) notes that the conflict between the generalists and scholars was somewhat mitigated by the field-coverage principle, which insulated professors from one another. This sort of “patterned isolation,” writes Veysey (1970) enabled people to “continually talk past each other, failing to listen to what others were actually saying” (338). The generalists attracted large numbers of undergraduates to their courses. However, they failed to gain a foothold in the graduate schools. This proved to be a critical mistake as, thus, they were unable to produce their successors. The scholars controlled the graduate programs, so they were able to produce the men and women who would take their place. Even when philology fell out of favor, the research methodology of scholarship remained. Philology was merely replaced by literary history as the focus of the scholarly study of literature. The victory of the research orientation is indicated by the 1916 change of the description of the purpose of the MLA from “the advancement of the *study* of the Modern Languages and their literatures” to “the advancement of *research* in Modern Languages and their literatures [emphasis mine]” (Graff 1987, 121).

A look at the numbers supports Graff’s argument. In 1850 there were eight graduate students in the United States and one producing scholar, Francis Child. By 1890

the number of graduate students had grown to 2000. By 1900, there were nearly 6000.

Similarly, within 10 years of its founding, MLA membership had grown from 40 to 400.

By 1900, it was becoming difficult to hire a professor of English who did not possess a Ph.D. And though their professors had doctorates in language, new Ph.D. graduates were typically awarded their doctorates in literature (Wellek 1953; Warner 1985).

The conflict between the different ways of studying literature did not vanish. Old rivalries such as the generalist vs. philologist were eventually superseded by new rivalries such as the scholars vs. critics; New Humanists vs. New Critics, academic critics vs. literary journalists and culture critics; and the critics and scholars vs. theorists (Graff 1987). However, by that point, English literature was firmly embedded in the modern research university. Its success resulted from an accommodation between the cultural values of the classical college and the research values of the modern university.

#### **ENGLISH STUDIES AT HARVARD (GEORGE LYMAN KITTREDGE)**

Like his mentor Francis Child, George Lyman Kittredge was the pre-eminent scholar of his time. Kittredge attended Harvard from 1878 to 1882, finishing second in his class while studying under Hill, Briggs, and, the formative influence upon his career, Francis Child.

Kittredge's respect for Child is perhaps best illustrated by an anecdote told by Child's nephew and one-time editor of the *Atlantic Monthly* Ellery Sedgwick. Sedgwick was a guest one night at a dinner attended by Kittredge. After trying unsuccessfully to engage Kittredge in conversation, Sedgwick told Kittredge of an incident that had occurred years ago when he'd visited his uncle in his study. Amidst a number of books and papers in the untidy study, a master's thesis stood apart, its pages open. "Look at

that,” said Sedgwick’s Uncle Frank. “Here is a dissertation [actually a thesis] written by a pupil of mine, George Lyman Kittredge. The name will be worth remembering.” After a pause Child added: “Do you see those shears? I could take those shears and cut that thesis into equal halves and, if I did, common fairness would oblige me to give each half the mark of A.”

“Professor Kittredge,” concluded Sedgwick, “was listening intently. An expression came over his face as if the heavens had opened and the Lord above had spoken. His arm stole around my shoulder. ‘Did—Professor—Child—say—that? Did—he—say—that—of—me? Sedgwick, drop the Professor. Call me Kittredge’” (qtd. in Hyder 1962, 31-2).

Upon his graduation, he taught at Phillips Exeter Academy and studied informally in Germany, where he learned Icelandic. In 1888 he returned to Harvard to teach as an instructor. Within seven years he was a full professor and had succeeded Professor Child as chair of the Division of Modern Languages. He taught English composition along with Wendell for his first three years, but from that point on he taught either language or linguistics. Over the course of his long career, he taught many courses including Icelandic, Germanic Mythology, Historical English Grammar, English and Scottish Popular Ballads, Anglo-Saxon Poetry, Chaucer, and Shakespeare, to name a few. He joined numerous scholarly societies and served as President of the MLA of America and the American Folk-lore Society (Hyder 1962).

The courses he taught and his professional memberships reflected the growth of English studies and the rise of modern languages and literature. Though he was awarded honorary doctorates from the University of Chicago, Harvard, Johns Hopkins, McGill,

Yale, Brown, Oxford, Union College, and Colby College, he never pursued a Ph.D. In that sense, he represents the old college's pre-professional era as professors in the succeeding generation would need a doctorate to pursue a university career.

Over the course of his career, as Myers (1996) reports, Kittredge's name became synonymous with scholarship: "Sometimes the name Kittredge was substituted for the name of philology" (127). However, as his biographer Hyder (1962) writes, Kittredge was never a "philologist" in the narrow sense, as the term came to be understood, the semantic aspects of language interested him most, and literature was always his primary interest" (121). In addition to being recognized as the leading Shakespeare scholar in the country, Kittredge's publications included thirty-nine pieces on Chaucer, the Student's Cambridge Edition of *English and Scottish Popular Ballad*, written in collaboration with Child's daughter Helen Child Sargent; *Chaucer and His Poetry*; *Study of Gawain and the Green Knight*; *Witchcraft in the Old and New England*, a noted edition of *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, and *The Old Farmer and His Almanack*.

Perhaps, the greatest testament to his scholarly ability is the backhanded compliment paid him by Irving Babbitt, who opposed the Germanic tradition of research-based scholarship associated with Kittredge. "The great difficulty is that Kittredge and his band are in their own field strong men, whereas the so-called "literary" men are likely to be weak-willed dilettantes. . . . The great field of virile ideals is left deserted by the philologists on the one side and the semi-aesthetes on the other" (qtd. in Graff 1987, 81). As a Vanderbilt professor during the 1920s observed: "Kittredge dominated practically every English department in the country" (qtd. in Myers 1996, 127).

In 1917 Kittredge was appointed to the newly endowed Gurney Professorship of English Literature. The last word on Kittredge, however, belongs to Kittredge's good friend William Lyon Phelps—the same Phelps whose course in Modern Novels sparked such a controversy at Yale in 1895—who characterized Kittredge as the man “generally acknowledged to be the foremost English scholar in America” (qtd. in Hyder 1962, 146). Neither Kittredge's title—Professor of English Literature—nor his description—the foremost English scholar in America—would have been possible in the classical college or probable in the early years of the modern university.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

# CREATIVE WRITING: A PROGRAM FOR CREATING CULTURE

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*We study literature today as if nobody ever again intended to write any more of it.*

—Allen Tate

*We must set about restoring the traditional alliance of scholarship and criticism, the divorce of which has worked injury to both and played havoc with education.*

—Norman Foerster

*As things now stand even the best of the writing programs are not integrated with other facets of literary studies. "Creative Writing" is a (usually) suspect alternative to "criticism" or "scholarship."*

—R.V. Cassill

### CREATIVE READING AND CREATIVE WRITING

The term "creative writing" was apparently coined by Ralph Waldo Emerson in a speech to the Phi Beta Kappa Society at the Chapel at Harvard University on August 31, 1837, entitled "The American Scholar." In his address Emerson (1837) chided American scholars for merely parroting others rather than doing their own thinking. The scholar, argued Emerson, in his right state, is Man Thinking. Unfortunately, in his degenerated state, a scholar becomes a mere parrot of other men's thinking. "Meek young men grow up in libraries," he said, "believing it their duty to accept the views which Cicero, Locke, and Bacon have given, forgetful that Cicero, Locke and Bacon were only young men in libraries when they wrote these books" (56).<sup>1</sup> The true scholar, Emerson argued, realizes

the necessity of engaging with the material, not merely absorbing it. “There is then creative reading, as well as creative writing” (58). Clearly, “creative writing” was the simile and not the focus of Emerson’s comments; nevertheless, the term stuck.

Emerson’s speech, called for not only a new American scholar but also a focus on creating knowledge rather than merely transmitting it. Books and colleges, he noted, tend to “stop with some past utterance of genius. This is good, say they,—let us hold by this. They pin me down. They look backward and not forward. But genius always looks forward. The eyes of man are set in his forehead, not in his hindhead. Man hopes. Genius creates. To create,—to create,—is the proof of a divine presence” (57).

A scholar, Emerson pointed out, must not fear his own thoughts but trust in them. “[I]f the single man plant himself indomitably on his instincts, and there abide, the huge world will come round to him” (69). For the scholar should provide insight into the world today, rather than antique or future worlds (67).

Emerson called for a new pedagogy, noting that the aim of teaching is not drill but inspiration. “Colleges,” argued Emerson, “have their indispensable office,—to teach elements. But they can only highly serve us, when they aim not to drill, but to create; when they gather from every ray of various genius to their hospitable halls, and, by the concentrated fires, set the hearts of their youth on flame” (58).

Emerson’s objectives in “The American Scholar,” writes Cavell (1990) were to persuade his audience that (1) literature requires a certain type of labor, and (2) the labor required is not scholarship but a creative learning. The true scholar creates knowledge by engaging with the material not by merely passively accepting it.



However, Emerson's call for reform in the late 1830s, like Wayland's call in the 40s, fell, the most part, on deaf ears.

#### **ENGLISH STUDIES AT HARVARD (BARRETT WENDELL)**

In *The Elephants Teach*, his history of the rise of creative writing, Myers (1996) writes that the beginnings of creative writing in the university coincided with the rise of English composition at Harvard. Myers credits Barrett Wendell and his establishment of English 12, an advanced composition course, as the founding of creative writing: "English composition was also creative writing's first name; and though the name was later changed, the initial conception—the original motive behind English composition and creative writing both—belonged to Wendell" (47).

Wendell began teaching at Harvard in 1880 after a chance meeting on the street with his former teacher Adams Sherman Hill. Years later, Wendell recalled the incident:

He asked me what I was doing. I told him I was reading law. He asked whether I liked it; I said no. And on his duly inquiring what kind of job I should prefer, I am said to have answered, "Even yours." Somehow the incident stuck in his memory. (qtd. in Myers 1996, 46)

Wendell would fail his bar exam. Meanwhile, Hill decided he needed help reading sophomore compositions. He recommended to Eliot that Wendell be hired on a temporary basis as his assistant (Myers 1996). The following year Wendell was not hired back due to budget constraints. However, he was re-hired in 1882 and directed to help improve how the writing courses were being taught. His rise at Harvard was slow. He was not promoted to Assistant Professor (his first permanent position) until 1888, and it took another ten years before he was promoted to Professor (Simmons 1995).

Wendell did not aspire to be a teacher, hoping to be a creative writer (a term, Myers (1996) notes, Wendell had used as early as 1886 to distinguish one type of writer from another). However, when his novels *The Duchess Emilia* (1885) and *Rankell's Remains* (1887) flopped—a cruel but clever writer for the *Harvard Advocate* attributed the novels to the author Whendull Bearit—Wendell focused his attention on his academic career (Myers 1996).

Wendell was a recognized eccentric at Harvard. His affected English accent, the cane he used for he walking due to a bad back, his “unacademic, fashionable, English-looking clothes and spats” (Self 1975, 32), made him stand out. Why did he go to such trouble? His colleague Santayana, speculated that Wendell “wished to be a Cavalier, all courage and elegance. His speech was a failure as a mark of elegance but it was a success as a proof of courage. Anyhow, it was a profound constant protest against being like other people” (qtd in Self 1975, 32).

Wendell was a walking contradiction. With only a Bachelor of Arts degree, Wendell felt “queerly out of it academically,” as he put it during a lecture at the Sorbonne. Yet, his *A Literary History of America* was one of the most important scholarly texts of its time. Wendell longed to have been born fifty years earlier, feeling he was out-of-step with the changes going on in society and the academy. Yet, he was a trailblazer in American literature, English composition, and creative writing.

Wendell took a writer’s approach to teaching composition. Simmons (1995) writes that “Wendell’s own pedagogy was formed at least in part as a rejection of the pedagogy he helped shape in English A [Harvard’s required freshman composition course]” (329). Specifically, Wendell rejected the identities current-traditional rhetoric

forced on the teacher—correctness cop—and student—remedial pupil. Thus, in 1884 when Wendell created English 12,<sup>2</sup> an elective in advanced composition, he took a different pedagogical approach. He treated his students as writers and strived to help them find their voice. His own role was that of mentor and model of how a writers works.

Wendell only lectured on Mondays. On Fridays, students revised graded papers or wrote anonymous peer reviews of another student's paper. On Wednesdays, instead of reading a prepared lecture, Wendell discussed in stream-of-consciousness fashion various "points of departure," to the states of mind that he felt enabled writers to write well. Such discussions included "suggestions for gathering information and ideas for themes" (Simmons 1995, 333), discussions which certainly sound like rhetorical invention, which, of course, current-traditional rhetoric ignored. As Simmons notes, these discussions exemplified a sort of talk-aloud protocol of a writer in the act of composing. Wendell called the course reading assignments "points of departure" because, as his lecture notes put it, "you must depart from [the readings]—not run alongside" (qtd. in Simmons 1995, 333). Here, of course, we see Emerson's notion of creative learning.

"The central aim of Wendell's pedagogy," writes Simmons (1995), "was to help students learn to think of themselves as writers and his central method of doing this was the daily theme" (335). Wendell believed regular writing of this nature helped a writer develop *sympathy*, a key concept from the Scottish Enlightenment. In his textbook *English Compostion*, Wendell (1891) wrote, "It is the perception of what makes one moment different from another that marks the sympathetic character of the artist; and

nothing can do more to make life interesting than a deliberate cultivation of such sympathy” (265).

Of course, Wendell is most noted in histories of rhetoric and composition as the originator of the daily theme. The idea for the “daily theme,” Wendell recalled, was suggested to my mind by talking to a friend who was connected with a Boston newspaper. He remarked the fact that whoever becomes a reporter, no matter how ignorant he began, learned by the very effort of reporting to express himself in a readable way, in a way that the public would like; and, at the same time, that reporting enormously stimulated observations of life, precisely the thing which I found my pupils in Harvard College to lack. (qtd. in Myers 1996, 49)

Implementing the suggestion, Wendell required students to turn in a single page of writing each day before 10:00 a.m. A student could choose his own topic:

It may be something he has seen, it may be something he has thought about. The only requisites are that the subject shall be a matter of observation during the day when it is written, that the expression of it shall not exceed a hundred words or so, and that the style shall be fluent and agreeable. (qtd. in Myers 1996, 49)

Allowing students to select their own topic, as Simmons (1995) notes, was a fairly radical act, judging from nineteenth century composition textbooks. Wendell began the class each year by discussing the value of the daily theme for establishing a regular writing habit, improving powers of observation and style, and developing the ability to captivate your reader. Throughout the term, he would read examples aloud, pointing out the

strengths and weaknesses (Adams 1993). The daily theme also helped writers discover their own voice. After several years of reading daily themes, Wendell wrote that it was impossible to write in an inauthentic voice six days a week for eight months: “Willingly or not, a daily correspondent must in the long run reveal himself pretty much as he is” (qtd. in Simmons 1995, 335).

English 12 attracted a number of students interested in creative writing. As Walter Eaton, a student of Wendell’s who went on to become a drama critic for the *New York Tribune* and a Princeton professor of playwriting, put it: “What Wendell did for Harvard was actually to make a place there—for a time; at least,—in which the artist could find encouragement and counsel” (qtd. in Adams 1993, 47). W.E. DuBois enrolled in English 12, as he noted in a theme for Wendell believing “foolishly perhaps, but sincerely, that I have something to say to the world, and I have taken English 12 in order to say it well” (qtd. in Adams 1993, 47). DuBois noted in his autobiography that “Barrett Wendell rather liked that last sentence. He read it out to the class” (qtd. in Adams 1993, 47). Similarly, Robert Frost attempted to skip freshman English “hoping that he was qualified to take Barrett Wendell’s course in advanced composition” (qtd. in Adams 1993, 47).

Years later, Wendell explained the objective behind English composition. It was “an educational experiment,” that aimed to teach “everyday students” to write with “habitual and unpretentious skill,” while enabling “exceptional pupils” to “become skillful creative artists—poets, if they truly be poets, of refreshingly confident technical power” (qtd. in Myers 1996, 48).“ As Simmons (1995) aptly observes, “Wendell’s English 12 provided a forum where students could be taken seriously as writers” (341).

In the 1880s, Briggs, who had been teaching freshman composition, and Wendell, who had been teaching advanced composition, decided to trade courses for a while. In preparation, Wendell created a new set of lectures. In 1891, these lectures were published as *English Composition*. Kitzhaber (1953) writes that the approach and tone of the book was unusual in that it was both simplistic and informal. “Wendell’s power of synthesis reduces complicated theory to a few broad and simple generalizations expressed in an easy conversational tone . . . . It was perhaps the first text in the history of the subject that, while avowing the aim of simplifying rhetorical theory, actually had some success in doing so” (68). In it Wendell focused on two trios of principles: unity, coherence, and mass; and clearness, force, and elegance. *English Composition* went through at least twenty editions and had wide influence, turning the attention away from correctness to effectiveness of larger units (paragraphs and entire compositions) (Kitzhaber 1953, Myers 1996).

#### **WILLIAM HUGHES MEARNS**

The teaching of creative writing under its own name was originated in the 1920s in a junior high by William Hughes Mearns (rhymes with burns), student of Barrett Wendell. While in high school in Philadelphia, Mearns was taught by Albert H. Smyth, who argued for the teaching of literature rather than philology. Mearns attended Harvard, where, he fell under the influence of Barrett Wendell, George Pierce Baker, and William James. Wendell encouraged his writing, Baker inspired him to write plays, and James suggested he become a teacher to support himself, though he secured a promise from Mearns not to get a Ph.D. Mearns went on to study at the University of Pennsylvania for six years, but, heeding James’ advice, did not take an advanced degree (Myers 1996).

He taught English at the Philadelphia School of Pedagogy for 18 years, but his major work resulted from his association with the Shady Hill Day School, which he directed from 1914 through 1917. A follower of Dewey's ideas of progressive education reform, Mearns began experimenting with the creative process of children 3 to 8. The assistant secretary of the General Education Board of the Rockefeller Foundation, Abraham Flexner, took note of Mearns' work and in 1920 recruited him to take over the English curriculum at the Lincoln School, a progressive laboratory school run by Teachers College at Columbia University.

It was there that Mearns experimented with replacing English with creative writing. In 1922, one of his students' poems was selected for inclusion in the *Anthology of Magazine Verse and Yearbook of American Poetry*. The following year, Mearns gathered the best work of his students from the past three years and published it as *Lincoln Verse, Story, and Essay* (Myers 1996).

In 1925, Mearns published *Creative Youth* and four years later *Creative Power*. The books were a tremendous success. In them, Mearns reported the results of his experiment challenged other teachers to follow his example. In *Creative Youth*, Mearns referred to "creative writing" for the first time in referring to a course of study. As Myers (1996) observes, "It was not called creative writing until Mearns called it creative writing. And then it was rarely called anything else" (103). In just a little over a decade, creative writing became one of the most popular subjects in the curriculum and secured the approval of the NCTE. Myers writes that it is unlikely creative writing would have achieved such rapid success were it not for the fact that progressive education had

become a force in education. Interestingly, when the Progressive Education Association was founded in 1919 its honorary President was none other than Harvard's Charles Eliot.

#### **NORMAN FOERSTER AND THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF CREATIVE WRITING**

In 1928 Paul Kaufman, an English Professor at American University, urged college teachers to provide instruction in creative writing. He argued that although Harvard's composition courses were producing some good writers, that creative writing in general was ignored due to (1) a lack of qualified faculty, and (2) the way English was being taught—an overemphasis on correctness in writing courses and scholarship in literature courses. He suggested hiring professional authors to teach the courses and to shift the focus of instruction to teaching writing creatively (Kaufman 1928).

While no university in America had established a program of creative writing before 1930, an *English Journal* survey found that individual courses were being taught in forty-one colleges and universities. However, he notes, it was a vague pursuit, “one-half composition, one-half self expression. Its *form* was Barrett Wendell's gift to the course, while its *content* was Hughes Mearns” (Myers 1996, 123).

However, the institutionalization of creative writing did not result from the evolution of these courses, Myers (1996) argues, rather, it “was devised as an explicit solution to an explicit problem. It was an effort to integrate literary knowledge with literary practices” (13). The author of the solution was Norman Foerster (pronounced firster). Like Wendell, Foerster had hoped to be a writer. He attended Harvard where he adopted his mentor Irving Babbit's new humanism. Upon graduating in 1910, Foerster became an instructor of English Literature at the University of Wisconsin. He earned a master's degree there in 1912. Later, he noted he was interested in the advanced study of



literature, but that in those days the choice was between an investigator's Ph.D. or nothing. He chose the latter. In 1914 he became an associate professor at North Carolina, and five years later was promoted to full professor. Ten years later, in 1929, he published *The American Scholar*, an expansion of a paper originally read before the Graduate and Philological Club of the University of North Carolina in 1928-29.

In *The American Scholar*, whose title was a homage to Emerson's 1837 speech, Foerster (1929) argued that the scientific orientation of modern scholarship and the overemphasis on literary history at the expense of literature itself had crippled literary studies. As an alternative, he put forth his plan to "restore the traditional alliance of scholarship and criticism, the divorce of which has worked injury to both and played havoc with education" (42). The schism between scholarship and criticism, Foerster argued, was making American scholarship "narrowly mechanical and progressively tangential. . . . And it has played a major role in the disintegration of American education, for it has made the study of the humanities scientific in an age already blinded with excess of scientific light, an age that is groping in vain for such other light as literature could shed if it were rightly studied" (42)."

In short, Foerster felt the modern university had abandoned the humanistic values of the classical college. As Babbitt observed in *Literature and the American College* (1908), modern culture had fallen under the influence of science and romanticism, resulting in materialism and a neglect of spirituality. Humanists such as Babbitt and Foerster were particularly bothered by how literature had been affected by these changes. Too often the focus of literary study was science rather than "the universal dimensions of the human condition" (qtd. in Hoeveler 1977, 117). As Foerster (1929) put it:

Literature is more than science, since, unlike science it is itself critical, itself selective and qualitative, itself concerned with human values that have no counterpart in physical nature; and literature can be understood only when studied with the instruments it itself employs, which are philosophical--ethical and aesthetic in vital fusion--vastly more than they are scientific. (41)

As Myers (1996) observes, "As much as anything, creative writing owes its existence to an antischolarly animus that was originally directed against philology" (16).

Foerster's solution to the problem was to reconstruct graduate studies in line with the principles of New Humanism. He soon received an opportunity to do just that when he was hired to take over the newly established School of Letters at the University of Iowa. Foerster wanted the School of Letters to be a school of criticism. Austin Warren wrote to him upon Foerster's hiring, "You are to create, I take it, the sort of graduate school of criticism you plead for so eloquently in *The American Scholar*" (qtd. in Myers 126). Foerster found allies in the New Critics, who shared his belief that criticism provided a better basis for a literary education than either philology or literary history. In addition, they, like Foerster held that creative writing and criticism were two aspects of the same art. Wilbur Schramm, the first director of the Writers' Workshop, commented on the natural affinity between writer and critic in his chapter on "Imaginative Writing" in *Literary Scholarship*, edited by Foerster:

a [writer] teaches himself to write by a process of constant self-criticism. If he is a thoughtful writer, he will soon proceed from artistic evaluation to a judgment of ideas as well, for he will perceive the need of both art and wisdom. And thus he will join with his natural ally, the critic, to shift the

balance of interest in the graduate study of literature away from history and research, back toward art and philosophy, toward an interest in the true as well as the new. (qtd. in Gerber 1995, 81)

The new field of graduate study offered by the School of Letters was described in an article that appeared in the *Daily Iowan* on March 26, 1931:

In published announcements of recent years, the graduate college has defined the scope of creative scholarship in such a way as to permit the substitution of a poem, play, or other work of art for the most usual type of dissertation.

In accordance with this provision, Professor Foerster said, the school of letters is working out a type of discipline suitable for candidates whose literary interests are of a sort not at present given recognition in American graduate schools.

Today, he explained, the dissertation is everywhere viewed as a piece of language research or in literary history, these two fields being conceived as a means of understanding literature. The school of letters, however, believes that there are two other means of understanding literature, by *creating* it and by *criticizing* it.

All candidates for the Ph.D. will be expected to form some acquaintance with all four of these means. They may specialize in any one, language, literary history, literary criticism, or imaginative writing [emphasis added]. (qtd. in Wilbers 1980, 44)

Foerster was quick to point out that the School of Letters was not proposing “to establish a vocational school for authors or critics.” Instead, the objective was “to give all types of literary students [teachers, scholars, critics, and writers] a rigorous and appropriate discipline,” (qtd. in Wilbers 1980, 44) so that the majority of students, who presumably would become teachers, could be more effective. Thus, Foerster hoped to provide a way for creating new generations of New Humanists to compete against the philologists and literary historians being produced by existing doctoral programs.

The curriculum was a “sequence of courses in noncontemporary texts and authors, criticism, literary history, and even the history and structure of the English language” (qtd. in Myers 1996, 136). Foerster’s plan for Iowa had three main points:

- 1) It would be a graduate program.
- 2) For master’s candidates the “heart” of the program would be a seminar—“a sort of literary club presided over by a professor keenly interested in writers’ problems” (137).
- 3) The Ph.D. option culminated in a dissertation—“a piece of imaginative writing,”<sup>3</sup> which must demonstrate both command of literary technique and creative energy. Master’s candidates would take a “searching general examination” instead of writing a thesis. Promising candidates would be encouraged to pursue a Ph.D. in any of the four disciplines, including creative writing.

Iowa’s Dean of the Graduate College, Carl Seashore had paved the way for the creative dissertation by allowing the faculty to give graduate credit for creative work. By arguing that research was a creative act and, therefore, was similar to creative acts in the arts and

literature, Seashore won the support of the faculty despite the fact most were scientists. In the winter of 1921-2, Edward Ford Piper took it one step forward by convincing the Graduate Council that “the thesis requirement may be interpreted broadly so as to include artistic production” (Gerber 1995, 52). It was Foerster, however, who convinced the administration to accept creative dissertations for the Ph.D.

Though Foerster embraced creative writing at the School of Letters, he held a much different view of it than Mearns. For Foerster and other humanists, the problem with the creativist approach to creative writing is that it produces merely expressive discourse, of little interest to any one other than the author. Instead, Foerster believed creative writing should make use of cultural values to write about something bigger than himself.

In 1935 Foerster decided he wanted a journal to promote critical and creative writing, and he attempted to take over Baldwin Maxwell’s *Philological Quarterly*. Maxwell complained to Carl Seashore, the graduate dean, who managed to find funds for both journals. *American Prefaces: A Journal of Critical and Imaginative Writing* published its first issue in October of 1935 with Schramm as its editor and Foerster as advisory editor. The journal’s title *Prefaces* was reflective of the editors’ goal to publish the first works of young writers. *Prefaces* also published articles by well-known writers such as T.S. Eliot, Robert Frost, Cleanth Brooks, and others. The quality of writing in the journal was high and quickly established *Preface*’s reputation (Gerber 1995).

#### **THE WRITERS’ WORKSHOP**

The Iowa Writers’ Workshop, the workshop which spawned creative writing programs across the country, was not created by Foerster. Credit for its founding belongs

to Edward Ford Piper, an acclaimed regional poet and folklorist, who joined Iowa in 1905 and was still there when Foerster arrived a quarter of a century later. As Gerber (1995) writes, creative writing was a strong area at Iowa long before Foerster's arrival. George Cram Cook offered the university's first known class on creative writing entitled "Verse-Making Class" in 1896. Cook, who began college at Iowa, completed his senior year at Harvard where he studied English 12 with Barrett Wendell. A diary entry from that year reads as follows:

October 6, '92: I am discouraged to-day. I have done no good work since I have been here and the college year has been under way four days. I seem unable to write anything good in English 12. If I cannot write, why throw away my life in fruitless effort? My literary taste is not good. It is merely chance whether I like a thing which Barrett Wendell says is good. I am nineteen years old tomorrow, and for all I can see I am not doing as good work as I was doing a year ago. I will shut my teeth and go on patiently. I *will* succeed. (qtd. in Adams 1993, 86)

Cook's determination carried him through the class and, ultimately, he adopted some of Wendell's methods—such as his seemingly unstructured classes and his discussion sessions—and brought them with him to Iowa.

Two years after Cook's first creative writing class, Iowa's Clarke Fisher Ansley provided practice in the short story in his advanced composition course in 1899. Upon becoming department head in 1900, he assigned Sam Sloan to teach Cook's course in poetry (Cook had left Iowa) along with a course in the short story. However, it was Piper who is most responsible for instituting the workshop format when he arrived in 1905.

Piper's graduate writing seminar had been informally referred to as a workshop for years, but it wasn't until after his death in the spring of 1939 that the course was officially titled "Writers' Workshop" in the 1939-40 catalogue. The course description noted: "Group conferences and individual conferences. Consult Professor Schramm for permission to register" (qtd. in Gerber 1995, 82).

Schramm served as director of the Writers' Workshop from Piper's death in May of 1939 until he requested a leave of absence to join the war effort at the completion of the fall semester of 1941-2. Wilbers (1980) writes that Schramm played a significant role in defending the program and the legitimacy of a creative dissertation. Schramm was succeeded by Paul Engle. Years later, Schramm downplayed his role in establishing the reputation of the Writers' Workshop, saying, "My job was perhaps to preside at the birth, but Paul raised the infant" (qtd. in Wilbers 1980, 83).

During Engle's twenty-four year tenure as director, the program grew from fewer than 12 students during the war years to 250 graduate students in 1965. Engle's genius at publicity and his sheer energy, writes Wilbers (1980), succeeded in establishing Iowa's reputation as the premier institution in the country for creative writing. Myers (1996) notes that graduate programs in creative writing were created at four other universities during the 40s: Johns Hopkins, Stanford, University of Denver, and Cornell.

As Myers notes, Iowa and the four other programs provided the bulk of training in creative writing for the next two decades. It wasn't until the mid-sixties that the boom in creative writing programs began. By 1970, the number of programs had risen to forty-four; by 1980 there were over a hundred (Myers 1996). Graduates and teachers from Iowa's Writers' Workshop founded at least twenty-five other programs. As Donald

Justice observed, “Those who went through Iowa went out and took part in other writing programs—a kind of pyramid scheme, it seems now, looking back” (qtd in Myers 1996, 164). “The elephant machine,” as Myers terms it, has continued to produce. Today, according to The Association of Writers and Writing Programs website, there are over 340 writing programs in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom.

Although Foerster did not anticipate the rise and institutionalization of creative writing as a discipline of its own, he did ground it in the cultural ideal of the classical college. Allied with criticism, creative writing was institutionalized as a reaction against philology and the research-based scholarship of the modern university. Thus, another sub-discipline of English studies was formed. And, once again, a part of English studies was institutionalized in the modern university with the ideals of the classical college.



## CHAPTER TWELVE

# A LOOK BACK/AROUND/AHEAD

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*I could hear my heart beating. I could hear everyone's heart. I could hear the human noise we sat there making, not one of us moving, not even when the room went dark.*

—Raymond Carver  
“What We Talk About When We Talk About Love”

### A LOOK BACK

Histories inevitably underdetermine the reality they try to describe, and this is no exception. Throughout this text, I have touched upon a number of factors that I believe contributed to the rise of English studies, but I have no illusions that I have identified them all or even given those I have identified the proper emphasis. Nevertheless, it is helpful to look back and briefly review these factors before looking around at the present of English studies or ahead to its future.

Shut out from the classical curriculum, English studies emerged in the wake of or amidst a number of significant changes, including

- 1) an epistemological revolution that changed the goal of higher education from transmitting knowledge to creating it
- 2) the rise of science and fall of religion
- 3) the teaching of “proper English” for political reasons by groups marginalized within the English empire.
- 4) the expansion of the student body to the middle class

- 5) a pedagogical revolution that resulted in, among other things, a shift from oral to written examination
- 6) technological advances that made printing cheap and printed material readily available to the general public
- 7) the rise of industrialization and capitalism, resulting in a demand for literate employees
- 8) the professionalization project of the nineteenth century which led to the university becoming the accrediting authority for the professions
- 9) the rise of linguistic correctness in both speech and writing
- 10) the rise of nationalism and an increased focus on American English and literature
- 11) the transformation of the classical college into the modern university
- 12) the fall of mental discipline

The epistemological revolution of the seventeenth century changed the goal of higher education from transmitting knowledge to creating it. This led to the rise of science as well as a redefinition of logic and rhetoric. Political struggles with England caused the Dissenters and Scots to emphasize the English language in their schools in order to protect their rights and improve their chances for success within the English empire. They taught “proper” English for much the same reason that English universities taught Greek and Latin—because it represented the language of power and prestige.

Scientific advances in geology and evolution called into question the received knowledge of religion. As religion lost its previous influence in higher education, science took its place. Fearful of events such as the French Revolution, German

Romanticists such as Humboldt employed the notion of *Bildung* to form the modern university. By cultivating the individual, the Romanticists hoped they could avoid revolution. England's Matthew Arnold also advocated culture as a means of preventing anarchy and promoting social harmony. In essence, the Romantics and Arnold made a religion out of culture.

Within higher education, the expansion of the student body to the middle class shifted the focus of education to utility as a means of upward mobility. The rise in American nationalism after the Revolutionary War led to a greater emphasis on and acceptance of both American English and American literature. Meanwhile, the modern university shifted the underlying ideals of an education from (1) transmitting culture and citizenship to creating knowledge via research, and (2) confirming one's respectable place in society to promoting upward mobility. And finally, the crumbling of the doctrine of mental discipline demolished the defense used by classicists to justify the study of classical languages over English.

What is particularly interesting about English studies is that after being institutionalized in the modern university, it became the repository for the ideals of the old classical college. And when you think about it, it makes sense. In trying to become a part of the classical curriculum, English studies turned the arguments used against it around and used them as arguments for their inclusion. For a long time, the English language was perceived as too easy to provide mental discipline. However, Anglo-Saxon and philology were used by advocates of English to show English could be just as difficult as the classical languages. Similarly, English literature was once rejected because it was feared imaginative literature was a threat to morality. The Romantics and

Matthew Arnold turned that argument around as well, by claiming that literary culture could replace religion and provide moral development—*Bildung*—and act as a stabilizing element in society. Thus, English showed it could conform to the ideals of the classical college—culture and citizenship—and its pedagogical justification—mental discipline.

However, it should be noted, that what ultimately resulted in the institutionalization of English studies was not merely turning the old arguments around, but making new arguments for science—philological study—and utility—English composition.

#### **A LOOK AROUND**

If you look around English departments today, you will see various combinations of the genes of English studies. Combine culture and citizenship and you could wind up with multi-cultural studies in one department or an emphasis on the classics and an E.D. Hirsch, Jr.-like cultural literacy at another department. Or you may end up with two professors within the same department who hold these views. While on the surface our two departments or professors may seem to be diametrically opposed, on a deeper level they share the same educational ideal.

Combine two utility genes within the sub-discipline of English Composition and you get Teaching English as a Second Language or Writing Across the Curriculum. Combine a utility gene with a citizenship gene and you wind up with Service Learning. Combine a couple of recessive genes from the English studies pool and you may get a Departments of Rhetoric. Even the pedagogical rationale of mental discipline continues on today in English studies under the alias critical thinking. I could go on and on. The point is that within the population of English studies, all of these ideals live on.

## A LOOK AHEAD

Looking ahead, an argument can be made that we are facing another technological revolution, another pedagogical revolution, and another transformation of the university. Just as advances in printing technology during the nineteenth century dramatically increased the availability of written texts, today's computer and internet technology are revolutionizing the way we access information as well as the amount of information we have access to in the twenty-first century. Similarly, just as the revolution in printing technology along with other factors such as the rise in class size changed the method of instruction from recitation to lecture, today's technology and virtual students are changing the current method of instruction away from lecture.

And, of course, there are those who argue that the university itself is undergoing another transformation. In *The University in Ruins*, Bill Readings (1996) writes that university "is a ruined institution, one that has lost its *historical raison d'être*" (19). "In short," he notes, "the University is becoming a different kind of institution, one that is no longer linked to the destiny of the nation-state by virtue of its role as producer, protector, and inculcator of an idea of national culture" (3). Instead, he claims the university "is becoming a transnational bureaucratic corporation," (3) whose new ideal is excellence.

What does this all mean for English studies? It's hard to say. Certainly, you can argue that the position of English studies today is analogous to that of classical studies during the nineteenth century. English Literature, for example, typically focuses on canonical culture (though the notion of what is canonical has certainly expanded), while largely ignoring popular culture such as movies, television and music, just as classical studies focused on canonical culture while ignoring the popular culture of its day—

modern novels. Thus, it is conceivable that English studies could wither away like Latin and Greek.

If Readings is correct and the new ideal of the new university is excellence, then what constitutes excellence in English studies? Again, it's hard to say. As Readings rightly observes, the problem with using excellence as an ideal is that it is so nebulous. As Readings (1996) notes, "parking services and research grants can each be excellent, and their excellence is not dependent on any specific qualities or effects they share" (24). Excellence is "a purely internal unit of value" (27). Thus, excellence could be defined as an average time-to-graduation rate of four years or less. If students are not graduating in four years or less, graduation requirements could be lowered in order to make the time-to-graduation-rate "excellent," just as corporations make short-term decisions to increase the numbers for the current quarter at the expense of the long-term interests of the shareholders. In a sense, the advent of the corporate university takes us back to the ancient Greeks. For just as Plato and Isocrates complained that the Sophists valued persuasion over truth, critics of the corporate university complain it values appearance over reality. Or perhaps, more accurately, what they fear is that the corporate university believes appearance is reality, e.g., an excellent time-to-graduation rate means four years or less, regardless of what it takes to get there.

While I am not certain how English studies will fare in the corporate university, or whatever form the transformation of higher education might take, I believe the ideals of the classical college—culture and citizenship—will remain, if only as a voice of dissent. For humans need the community of other humans, Carver's "human noise" in the epigraph to this chapter. And communities have always wanted culture<sup>1</sup>—shared

values—and needed citizenship. As long as we are human, I doubt that will change. It is these ideals—culture and citizenship (rather than correctness or capitalism)—that I believe ultimately define English studies today and, hopefully, will continue to define English studies in the future.

## NOTES

### CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION: DISCIPLINING ENGLISH STUDIES

<sup>1</sup> As Georg Iggers noted in his “Introduction” to *Ranke, The Theory and Practice of History*, Leopold von Ranke (1983), xix-xx, in the nineteenth century *eigentlich* also connoted the more ambiguous meaning of essentially, which, Iggers argues, is the sense which Ranke characteristically used. For an example of how Americans misinterpreted Ranke, see G.B. Adams 1908 Annual Address to the American Historical Association in the *American Historical Review* Volume XIV, Number 2, January 1909.

<sup>1</sup> See Peter Novick’s (1988) *That Nobel Dream: The Objectivity Question and the American Historical Association*.

<sup>1</sup> See Tables 1 through 4 in Chapter One for a listing of some of the disciplinary histories devoted to these sub-disciplines.

### CHAPTER TWO: WHAT WE TALK ABOUT WHEN WE TALK ABOUT ENGLISH STUDIES

<sup>1</sup> See Koch (1976), Bové (1988), Fuller (20020).

<sup>2</sup> I adapted my title from Raymond Carver’s famous short story titled “What Do We Talk About When We Talk About Love?”

### CHAPTER THREE: THE CLASSICAL AMERICAN COLLEGE

<sup>1</sup> Yale was founded and chartered in 1701.

<sup>2</sup> For a more in-depth look at the liberal arts tradition, see Bruce Kimball’s seminal study on the topic *Orators and Philosophers*, which I draw heavily upon in this section.

<sup>3</sup> See Plato, *Gorgias* 502-522; Isocrates, *Against the Sophists* 2-11, 19-20.

<sup>4</sup> See Plato, *Phaedrus*, 259e-261a.

<sup>5</sup> See Aristotle, *On Rhetoric*, 1357a-1357b.

<sup>6</sup> See Cicero, *De Oratore* and Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* for their fullest treatment of education.

<sup>7</sup> See Cicero, *De Oratore* 3.74-77, 132-139; Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* 12.123-32.



**Notes to Pages 36 – 62**

<sup>8</sup> Morison (1935) notes that the connection between Emmanuel College, where John Harvard and thirty-five other emigrants to new England attended school, and Harvard has been well acknowledged.

<sup>9</sup> Ironically, Charles Chauncy, the man who replaced him, also held a heretical view on baptism. He believed children should be completely immersed. However, Chauncy agreed to the Board's condition that he keep his views to himself.

<sup>10</sup> At age 16, Franklin criticized the impractical education gentlemen received at Harvard in his *father's New England Courant* noting the extreme folly of those Parents, who, blind to their Children's Dulness, and insensible of the Solidarity of their Skulls, because they think their Purses can afford it, will needs send them to the Temple of Learning, where, for want of a suitable Genius, they learn little more than how to carry themselves handsomely, and enter a Room genteely (which might as well be acquired at a Dancing-School), and from whence they return, after abundance of trouble and Charges, as great Block-heads as ever, only more proud and conceited. (qtd in Morison 1936b, 61)  
Franklin continually pushed for a more utilitarian education and even sent an electrical machine to Yale for experiments (Rudolph 1962).

<sup>11</sup> In 1789 Benjamin Smith Barton was actually the first American to receive a graduate degree from Germany, earning a doctorate of medicine from Göttingen.

<sup>12</sup> The Professorship was funded by a generous \$20,000 endowment from Samuel Eliot, a merchant of Boston and grandfather of the future President of Harvard, Charles William Eliot.

<sup>13</sup> President Day wrote the Report of the Faculty, Part One and Professor Kingsley wrote Part Two.

<sup>14</sup> It should be noted that Day wrote that the American College was more like a German gymnasium and that "[w]hen the student has passed beyond the rugged and cheerless region of elementary learning, into the open and enchanting field where the great masters of science are moving onward with enthusiastic emulation; when, instead of plodding over a page of Latin or Greek, with his grammars and dictionaries, and commentaries, he reads those languages with facility and delight; when after taking a general survey of the extensive and diversified territories of literature, he has selected those spots for cultivation which are best adapted to his talents and taste; he may then be safely left to pursue his course, without the impulse of authoritative injunctions, or the regulations of statutes and penalites." (See Storr 1953, 162)

### Notes to Pages 63 - 94

<sup>15</sup>Yale provided the most college presidents to the new colleges in the West and South, and along with Princeton, provided the most faculty members.

### CHAPTER FOUR: THE NEW LOGIC AND RHETORIC

<sup>1</sup> As Grafton and Jardine (1986) observe, the support of the mercantile class proved critical when the university establishment tried to remove Ramée.

<sup>2</sup> According to Bacon, the pursuit of natural philosophy is handicapped by the limits of human nature (idols of the tribe), individual predilections (idols of the cave), the inadequacy of language (idols of the market-place), and flawed philosophies (idols of the theatre).

<sup>3</sup> According to Bacon, though idols of the cave and theatre can be remedied by method, idols of the tribe and market-place cannot be completely overcome.

<sup>4</sup> Gaukroger (2001) notes that Aristotle's views were misinterpreted during Bacon's time. Though Aristotle had outlined procedures for discovering knowledge using topics or places, his method of demonstrating knowledge—the syllogism—mistakenly was interpreted as his method of discovery.

<sup>5</sup> Sorley (1965) credits Bacon with using the English language for the first time as a vehicle for philosophical literature in 1605 with the publication of the *Advancement of Learning*. However, all of Bacon's major works were published in Latin.

<sup>6</sup> Locke's text, designed for university students, has been published under several titles, including *Some thoughts on the Conduct of the Understanding in the Search of Truth* and as *A Treatise on the Conduct of the Understanding*.

<sup>7</sup> Howell (1971) notes that Adam Smith and George Campbell were the first to advocate all six principles of the New Rhetoric.

### CHAPTER FIVE: THE RISE OF ENGLISH

<sup>1</sup> Indeed, it can be argued that today's corporate university is the logical result of the integration of higher education and the economy.

<sup>2</sup> Miller (1997) notes that Carstares, who had studied at Calvinist universities in Holland which were already teaching modern history and teaching in the vernacular, had ties to English Dissenters, as did many Scottish educators at the time.

### Notes to Pages 95 - 133

<sup>3</sup> We have no record of Smith's Edinburgh lectures. However, he repeated them at the University of Glasgow in 1762-3 and we have a student transcript of those lectures. The quote is taken from Smith's second lecture at the University of Glasgow on Friday, November 19, 1762.

<sup>4</sup> William A. Wallace and others argue that Thomas Reid rather than Hume was the chief influence upon Campbell's philosophy of human nature. In any case, the Aberdeen Philosophical Society of which both Reid and Campbell were members gave Hume's writings a great deal of attention.

<sup>5</sup> See Chapter 1.

### CHAPTER SIX: IMPORTING ENGLISH STUDIES

<sup>1</sup> Interestingly, Harvard also influenced the dissenting academies. As Smith (1954) notes in *The Birth of Modern Education*, Isaac Chauncy, whose father was Master of the Harvard from 1654 to 1672, came to England and became a tutor of the Congressional Fund's London Academy in 1701.

<sup>2</sup> Indeed, Mather had turned down the presidency of Harvard once before in 1681 (Morison 1936c).

<sup>3</sup> It is difficult to discriminate between the influence of dissenters and Scots as there was a lot of crossfertilization between the dissenting academies and Scottish universities. Sloan (1971) notes that the Scottish Universities had a large impact on the dissenting academies as many Dissenters went to study at Scotland because the Scottish universities possessed the power to grant degrees. Similarly, Scots studied at dissenting academies as well. See the following note.

<sup>4</sup> Hutcheson studied at a dissenting academy in Ireland before completing his studies in Glasgow. He later led a dissenting academy in Dublin before returning to Glasgow as a professor of moral philosophy in 1730 (Miller 1997).

<sup>5</sup> Sloan (1971) writes that Finley was introduced to Witherspoon by his acquaintances in the dissenting academies.

**Notes to Pages 134 - 149**

<sup>6</sup> Witherspoon wrote *Ecclesiastical Characteristics* shortly after the Moderate Party removed Thomas Gillespie, an evangelical preacher, for refusing to officiate at the installation of an unpopular candidate as minister of Inverkeithing parish (Landsman 1990). In *Serious Apology for the Ecclesiastical Characteristics* (1763), Witherspoon wrote that *Characteristics* was intended as a direct response to Hutcheson (Miller 1990b, 10). Witherspoon stated that the method of ridicule he utilized was inspired by Lord Shaftesbury. The title *Ecclesiastical Characteristics* was likely a jab against Shaftesbury's *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times* (1711) (Sloan 1971).

<sup>7</sup> Witherspoon was brought in by the trustees to try and heal the split between the Old Siders and New Siders. The Old Siders had hoped to elect Francis Alison as president (Sloan 1971).

<sup>8</sup> The influence of the Scottish Enlightenment upon America's founding fathers is perhaps best summarized by Garry Wills, who wrote that "[t]he education of our revolutionary generation can be symbolized by this fact: At age sixteen Jefferson and Madison and Hamilton were all being schooled by Scots who had come to America as adults" (qtd in Miller 1990b, 16).

<sup>9</sup> Andresen (1990) cites traditional histories of linguistics written by Rudolf von Raumer, Theodor Benfey, Vilhelm Thomsen, and Holger Pedersen as examples of histories which equated true linguistic activity during the nineteenth-century with Indo-European studies and the German approach.

<sup>10</sup> Simpson (1986) and Halloran (1990) note that Witherspoon coined the term "Americanism" as an analogy to "Scotticism." Simpson also points out that Witherspoon stated there would have been no shame associated with Scotticisms had Scotland remained independent from England. America, Witherspoon felt, would have a different fate: "[W]e shall find some centre or standard of our own, and not be subject to the inhabitants of that island, either in receiving new ways of speaking, or rejecting the old" (qtd in Simpson 1986, 23).

<sup>11</sup> At age 16, Franklin wrote in his family's newspaper, *The New England Courant*, that rich sent their sons to Harvard "where, for want of suitable Genius, they learn little more than to carry themselves handsomely, and enter a Room genteely. . . ." (Rudolph 1962, 20).

<sup>12</sup> Andresen (1990) notes that Pickering was elected Hancock Professor of Hebrew at Harvard in 1806 and offered the chair of Greek literature in 1812, but turned both down (105).

<sup>13</sup> Leventhal (1994) disputes this, arguing that Wolf's so-called innovations can be traced back to Heyne's seminar (243-248).

**Notes to Pages 150 - 183**

<sup>14</sup> To be fair, it should be noted that Bancroft acknowledged that manners should not matter. He relates a story of his first meeting with Goethe, who was considered scandalous in America for having a mistress and an out-of-wedlock son. Goethe, to Bancroft's surprise, was both friendly and gentle. At their meeting, Goethe wore a surtout without a waistcoat, revealing a stain upon his shirt. In a letter to his sister, Bancroft described Goethe and noted his own smallmindedness: "He had an air of majesty about him, and his grey locks made him look so respectable that I wondered how I could mind such a trifle as his dress" (qtd in Nye 1944, 40).

<sup>15</sup> Anderson and Braden (1968) write that since 1785 when the Overseers directed that more attention be given to English, the Hancock Professor had been responsible for the teaching of English.

<sup>16</sup> Eliphalet Pearson, who had been the Hancock Professor of Hebrew and Oriental languages since 1804, was probably the person who drafted the rules for the Boylston Professorship (Anderson and Braden 1968).

**CHAPTER SEVEN: LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE DURING THE YALE REPORT YEARS 1828 - 1870**

<sup>1</sup> Andresen (1990) notes that Jefferson and Franklin both owned copies of *Diversions of Purley*, and that Franklin loaned his copy to Webster.

**Notes to Pages 162 - 237**

<sup>2</sup> March had met McPhail while still teaching at Leicester. McPhail, a minister in Fredericksburg at the time, was so impressed with March that he recommended March to the college authorities (Franklin 1984).

<sup>3</sup> William's interest in Sanskritism had also been sparked by Josiah who had brought home books on the subject during his travels as a geologist.

<sup>4</sup> Of course, literature courses were strictly optional at this point in time.

<sup>5</sup> Thus, Child was an early example of education's ability to provide upward mobility.

<sup>6</sup> The title tutor, like instructor, merely indicated a low-ranking member of the faculty.

## Notes to Pages 184 – 244

### CHAPTER EIGHT: THE TRANSFORMATION TO THE MODERN AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

<sup>1</sup> Wayland did add, however, that the faculty might assign a student to take a class that they deem to his advantage.

<sup>2</sup> Tappan had been first recommended to the Board of Regents by one of *die neuen Amerikaners*, George Bancroft.

<sup>3</sup> The other half went to The Johns Hopkins Hospital.

<sup>4</sup> Veysey notes that while White's vision may have inspired the establishment of autonomous schools of political science at Columbia and Michigan, no such training occurred at Cornell until after White retired.

### CHAPTER NINE: THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF ENGLISH COMPOSITION

<sup>1</sup> Charles Francis Adams, Edwin Lawrence Godkin, and George R. Nutter are listed as the authors; however, in his autobiography, Adams claims authorship of all four Harvard Reports.

<sup>2</sup> See Kaufer and Carley (1993) for an extended discussion of the impact the printing revolution had upon the modern university and the shift to written pedagogy.

<sup>3</sup> See Goggin and Beatty (2000) for a fuller discussion of self-reinforcing mechanisms and the institutionalization of First Year Composition.

<sup>4</sup> In actuality, the first known record in print regarding complaints appeared in the 1896 *Century Magazine* article entitled "Two Ways of Teaching English." See Brereton (238-241) for a reprint of this article.

<sup>5</sup> Broome (1903) notes that English grammar may have been intended as a requirement at Williams College in 1795, but that it is uncertain.

<sup>6</sup> As Morison (1930) notes, in 1868-9, the last year of Thomas Hill's presidency at Harvard, all first year courses were required. First year students studied Greek, Latin, Mathematics, French and Elocution throughout the school year, while Ethics was required only during the first term (xlii-xliii).

<sup>7</sup> Barrett Wendell and W. B. Shubrick Clymer were also assistants to Hill.

### Notes to Pages 245 - 304

<sup>8</sup> Crowley (1998) notes that it is likely Phelps also wrote the anonymous *Century Magazine* article published in 1896 entitled “Two Ways of Teaching English.” In it, the author wrote: “We would not take the extreme position taken by some, that all practice in theme-writing is time thrown away; but after a costly experience of the drudgery that composition work forces on teacher and pupil, we would say emphatically that there is no educational method at present that involves so enormous an outlay of time, energy, and money, with so correspondingly small a result” (240).

<sup>9</sup> Clearly, first year composition was limited to undergraduate study and not considered a naturwissenschaft.

### CHAPTER TEN: LITERATURE OR WHAT TO DO WITH THE OTHER 95%

<sup>1</sup> President Dwight’s advice to discontinue the course was based on the impact refusing to do so would have on Phelps’s career (controlled by the Professors above him) and not on issues with the course itself.

<sup>2</sup> *Bildungsroman*, sagten wir, wird er heißen dürfen, 1. und vorzüglich, wegen des Stoffs, weil er des Helden Bildung in ihrem Anfang und Fortgang bis zu einer gewissen Stufe der Vollendung darstellt; 2. aber auch, weil er gerade durch diese Darstellung des Lesers Bildung in wieterm Umfang als jede andere Art des Romans fördert. (Kontje 1991, 16).

<sup>3</sup> In “Arnold, Reason, and Common Culture,” Gerald Graff notes that if such a thing as a common culture existed, there would be no need for the phrase, as it would be redundant (192).

### CHAPTER ELEVEN: CREATIVE WRITING: A PROGRAM FOR CREATING CULTURE

<sup>1</sup> Emerson’s inclusion of Bacon and Locke together with Cicero indicate the success of the new rhetoric and new logic in penetrating the curriculum.

<sup>2</sup> Morison (1930) notes that English 12 became one of the most popular of Harvard’s electives. Its enrollment, Adams (1993) writes, frequently exceeded 200 students, who were then split into seven sections.

<sup>3</sup> Iowa’s Carl Seashore, Dean of the Graduate College, had paved the way for the creative dissertation by accepting creative work—in addition to scholarly work—for advanced degrees in the arts (Wilbers 1980)

**Notes to Pages 305 – 311****CHAPTER TWELVE: A LOOK BACK/AROUND/AHEAD**

<sup>1</sup> Today, rather than focusing on a single monolithic culture, communities need to learn about a variety of cultures.



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