Employment of English

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Both of us have long job titles. We both hold appointments in the English department at Illinois; in addition to this, one of us has a faculty appointment in the women’s studies program while the other is a faculty affiliate of the Afro-American Studies and Research Program; and we’re both appointed faculty members in the Unit for Criticism and Interpretive Theory. We begin by noting our multiple institutional identities because they bear, directly and indirectly, on the subject of our essay: the ongoing critique of disciplinariness and institutionality that has characterized American universities at least since the early 1960s, and that has issued in the development of such programs as women’s studies and African American studies, at the same time that it has made possible
the English department careers of transdisciplinarians like Edward Said, Tania Modleski, N. Katherine Hayles, and Homi Bhabha.

In this essay we will discuss two related tendencies in higher education that have become increasingly visible in the three decades since 1964: first, the shift, within the university, from disciplinary structures to interdisciplinary formations, in the shape of cross-listed courses, extradisciplinary units of study, multiply appointed faculty members, and multidisciplinary courses; and, second, the concomitant shift, within English departments, from the study of literature to the study of culture. We’re not aiming for any earth-shaking conclusions about these changes in the academy; we’re more interested in making some observations about the historical imperatives that lie behind them and the so-called postmodern condition of which they are said to be part. But by our essay’s end we hope to have secured, among other things, an understanding of the status of “disciplinarity” in English partly by way of understanding some of the changes in the ways American universities have managed disciplinarity over the past thirty years.¹

We’ll begin by citing a recent theory of institutional change. In an essay entitled, appropriately enough, “Change,” Stanley Fish—who was once a literary critic but is now a theorist of law, professionalism, institutionality, interpretive theory, and free speech—addresses the charge that his theory of interpretive communities has no satisfactory account of change. “From the right,” he writes, “comes the complaint that an interpretive community, unconstrained by any responsibility to a determinate text, can simply declare a change without consulting anything but its own desires. . . . From the left comes the complaint that an interpretive community, enclosed in the armor of its own totalizing assumptions, is impervious to change and acts only to perpetuate itself and its interests” (Doing What Comes Naturally 142). Fish’s answer to these charges takes the form of a particularly Fishian reversal and displacement: an interpretive community is not a bulwark against change but in fact an “engine of change” (150); at the same time, it remains a community of shared principles, “homogeneous with respect to some general sense of purpose and purview, and heterogeneous with respect to the variety of practices it can accommodate” (153).
The way Fish redefines interpretive communities as "engines of change" has profound implications for how we understand disciplinarity and the history of disciplinary change: disciplines respond to external challenges, it seems, only if those external challenges are internal to the discipline.

That is, in order for a formulation from economics or mathematics or anthropology to be seen as related to a problem or project in literary studies, literary studies would themselves have to be understood in such a way that the arguments and conclusions of economics or mathematics or anthropology were already seen by practitioners as at least potentially relevant. To put the matter in what only seems to be a paradox, when a community is provoked to change by something outside it, that something will have already been inside, in the sense that the angle of its notice—the angle from which it is related to the community's project even before it is seen—will determine its shape, not after it is perceived, but as it is perceived. (147)

Fish's example is drawn from literary criticism and linguistics: from 1957 to 1970, during the period of the so-called Chomskian revolution, "only a small percentage of those working in literary studies was markedly affected by transformational grammar, which came and went without changing at all the way most literary business was done" (147–48). To those who would object that this model is still "too narrowly institutional" and says nothing about challenges from outside the disciplines altogether, Fish replies that extra-academic events can influence academic disciplines if and only if those disciplines have the potential to take stock of those events in the first place:

it depends on the extent to which the members of the community see the event in question as one that has a direct bearing on their conception of what they do; and that will depend on whether or not their conception of what they do, their sense of the enterprise, is bound up in an essential way with political issues. Some of us changed our teaching methods and our research priorities markedly during the Vietnam War; others of us went on as before as if nothing were happening. (149)
So far this is uncontroversial—and, in fact, a good part of what we say in this essay will consist of detailed elaborations on it. But before we proceed we want to sketch out some of the problems with which Fish’s essay leaves us. We’ll confine ourselves to three. First, Fish’s essay remains uncertain about precisely how the parameters of a community or a discipline respond to or accommodate change, since his definition of “community” proves to be as fluid as the definition of “paradigm” in Kuhn’s *Structure of Scientific Revolutions*: at times an interpretive community seems to consist of literary critics interested in linguistics; at times it appears to be made up of all professors of literature; and at times it is made up of all professors, or all intellectuals (with regard to, say, nonintellectual phenomena like the Vietnam War). So the size and constituency of these communities are themselves matters for constant interpretation and negotiation. Second, this account would leave us with disciplines whose changes have always already (potentially) occurred within even though the disciplines are not thereby understood to be static: on one hand, “since an interpretive community is an engine of change, there is no status quo to protect, for its operations are inseparable from the transformation of both its assumptions and interests” (156), but on the other hand, change was always prepared for, and new theories therefore change nothing: “A theoretical pronouncement is always an articulation of a shift that has in large part already occurred; it announces a rationale for practices already in force” (155). As we’ll see when we get to Berkeley a few pages hence, this position is crucial for understanding the recent history of higher education. And third, as Fish suggests in the closing pages of his argument, different interpretive communities and different disciplines have different investments in seeing themselves as stable or as fluid; whereas practitioners of literary study like to tell themselves that they have utterly revolutionized the field roughly every three weeks, lawyers and scientists inhabit disciplines that may be every bit as turbid and innovation-driven, but that constitutionally “see continuity where others, with less of a stake in the enterprise, might feel free to see change” (157).

So change does and does not happen all the time, and it all depends on which interpretive community you’re talking about as well as which
community you're talking from—assuming that you can tell what's inside and what's outside in the first place. It's not clear what conclusions one can draw from this characterization of intellectual change, particularly for an enterprise like English, which, as Fish rightly notes, is so various and capacious that certain areas of the discipline can seem to be undergoing revolutionary redefinition while other areas, barely contiguous, seem to feel no effects at all. Perhaps the one clear conclusion we can draw from Fish's model of change is that it helps clarify the English department's striking lack of disciplinary clarity: English, in this model, is a field whose center is nowhere and whose circumference is everywhere. To say so is to put matters somewhat hyperbolically, of course. But it is precisely in this hyperbolic sense that English has come to embody and dramatize the postmodern crisis of higher education more generally: English is a leading player in the current debates over the social function of the university not only because its internal heterogeneity seems to license the discipline to speak for the humanities—and sometimes even for the university—as a whole, but also because that heterogeneity emblematizes the crisis of representation in which American higher education is currently caught.

In order to make this point in more detail we need to back up a few steps and return, as so many of us are charged with longing to do, to the 1960s.

In his famous 1963 position paper The Uses of the University, Berkeley president Clark Kerr formulated in simple terms what he took to be the broad public misperceptions about the institution over which he presided: "There are two great clichés about the university," he wrote. "One pictures it as a radical institution, when in fact it is most conservative in its institutional conduct. The other pictures it as autonomous, a cloister, when the historical fact is that it has always responded . . . to the desires and demands of external groups. . . . The external reality is that [the university] is governed by history" (94–95). This sense of how universities are "governed" involves an especially ambiguous claim, and Kerr was called out on it a year later by militant students at his own university. Kerr's blueprint for what he called the new "multiversity" directed the public as well as the university constituency to adapt to a newly para-
mount aim of contemporary education, namely, to provide students and disciplinary units with the intellectual training and resources designed to service the needs of government and industry. Outraged students, already alarmed by what they saw as research universities' complicity in Cold War escalation, charged that Kerr's "multiversity" amounted to little more than a "public utility serving the purely technical needs of a society" (Free Speech Movement 213) by producing "enormous numbers of safe, highly skilled, and respectable automatons" (Cleaveland 75) who were not educated so much as indoctrinated through a "random series of isolated training situations" (Davidson 278). At best, they claimed, the multiversity's putative service to "history" took "history" in a perversely narrow sense, to mean "a particular stage . . . of American society" (Savio 218) characterized by the production needs of an industrial, military, and technological boom. At worst, it expunged the broader understanding of history that prevailed among activist students at Berkeley, who perceived that the "history" responsible for the accelerated campus production of industrial-military technology was actually part of the momentous dialectic of the so-called world-in-revolution, ranging from Algeria to Mississippi, from Cuba to Beijing.

The American educational policies that produced the fragmentation and compartmentalization of training did so, claimed its New Left critics, in tandem with the specialization necessary for capitalism's dominion. In fact (it now sounds strange to say), many of these critics rejected the whole concept of multiplicity that underwrote Kerr's description of the multiversity; and in doing so they found themselves walking a rhetorical tightrope between, on the one hand, a then fashionable Sartrian denunciation of the brutal effects of fragmentation on individualism, and on the other hand a growing (and peculiarly American) radical democratic imperative to honor cultural pluralism. Ultimately what these students agitated for was a system that would unify knowledges produced in disparate academic sites, render them choate, and especially connect them to knowledges produced outside the university. As one activist wrote, transformation "cannot take place unless it occurs within and is organically connected to the practice of a mass radical political move-
ment. . . . Every attempt should be made to connect campus issues with off-campus questions" (Davidson 282).

This problem of how to articulate university knowledges to external social knowledges became the centerpiece of the Free Speech Movement at Berkeley in 1964, and at the heart of the problem was an inflamed debate over the literal and ideological boundaries of the university: the twenty-six-foot strip of land at the perimeter of the campus, where students had been accustomed to setting up publicity tables for extra-university political organizations such as CORE (Congress of Racial Equality) and SNCC (Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee), was peremptorily reclaimed by the university as an on-campus space, suitable only for the circulation of material pertaining to “internal” concerns. In other words, the literal boundary between inside and outside became the site of ideological contestation, and the resulting riots and sit-ins that prevailed for the next four months were aimed at breaking the administrative authorization of what constituted “inside” and “outside”—as well as the (corresponding) administrative definition of what constituted “appropriate” topics for discussion within this contested public space of the university.

From this challenging of the university’s sovereign “domain,” this testing of arbitrary boundaries between forms and sites of knowledge, it is a short step to proclamations issuing from student manifestos like the French Nanterre Manifesto of 1968, which declares that as a result of the increasingly permeable membrane between the insides and outsides of universities, the “critique of cultural alienation” begun in the university is finally “merg[ing] with the critique of socioeconomic exploitation and political oppression” that lies beyond its walls (270). If this process is to be secured, the manifesto advises, “knowledge must . . . ceaselessly be rescued from falling into the status of a thing known; its compartmentalization (in departments or fields of specialization within the Faculty, for example) must be thrown into question; its ultimate goal must be under constant suspicion” (273).  

Now divisions within the university are suspect; the whole notion of departmental solvency is under question. And from the perspective of this university-generated social critique,
department faculty members are particularly culpable for the state of knowledge:

The Faculty is at the center of two grand operations directed at the means of understanding and expressions: their defusing and their recuperation. Their defusing is the Faculty of Dead Letters; their recuperation, the Faculty of Human Relations. In the first case, intelligence and inventiveness are subverted from practice toward fetishism of the finished work, of the past, of what is established; in the second case, these qualities [i.e., intelligence and inventiveness] are employed to condition the work force, to increase its efficiency. Defusing creates erudition, recuperation expertise. (271)

On the one hand, a fetish for dead letters that turns education into a precious antiquarianism; on the other hand, education for employment and nothing more than employment. On the one hand, a university that has too little to do with the history of its own time; on the other hand, a university that plays just the wrong role in the history of its own time. In other words, from this angle, the new utilitarian “multiversities” have it within their fractionalizing power to simply recuperate social critique; and the old-style universities, still impervious to history and social critique, refuse to recognize the legitimacy of dynamic contemporary claims on the university.

If you tone down this manifesto and modify its terms of opprobrium, what you’ll wind up with is more or less the outline of Jean-François Lyotard’s influential monograph *The Postmodern Condition*—a document not translated into English until 1984. In the Nanterre document’s distinction between the Faculty of Dead Letters and the Faculty of Human Relations, that is, we can see the outlines of Lyotard’s distinction between the “emancipator humanism” of the old university (a humanism now degenerate and aestheticized, in the Nanterre model) and the legitimation of education through “performativity” in the postmodern university. What Lyotard learned from his days as a protest organizer at Nanterre, we suggest, was just this distinction between the university of Cardinal Newman and the multiversity of Clark Kerr. When “the
desired goal becomes the optimal contribution of higher education to the best performativity of the social system,” writes Lyotard, two things happen: first, knowledge is put in the service of enhancing global economic competition; and second,

higher learning will have to continue to supply the social system with the skills fulfilling society’s own needs, which center on maintaining its internal cohesion. . . .

. . . In a context of delegitimation, universities and the institutions of higher learning are called upon to create skills, and no longer ideals—so many doctors, so many teachers in a given discipline, so many engineers, so many administrators, etc. The transmission of knowledge is no longer designed to train an elite capable of guiding the nation towards its emancipation, but to supply the system with players capable of acceptably fulfilling their roles at the pragmatic posts required by its institutions. (48)

There’s no question that Lyotard’s diagnosis of “the postmodern condition” is deeply informed by the struggles over the multiversity in the 1960s, but we do not point this out simply to condemn Lyotard as a practitioner of failed ’68 philosophy.³ On the contrary, in what follows we want to ask what we hope is a more productive (and certainly a more self-reflexive) question: what happens when Lyotard’s account of knowledge in the postmodern era itself becomes influential in the humanities, such that various academic disciplines take up the challenge to “dereify” knowledge and contest the criterion of performativity? What happens when this form of New Left critique is itself institutionalized?

It’s possible to answer this question simply by saying that if New Left critique has been engaged to any extent by academic institutions, then to that extent it has been defused, recuperated, incorporated, incarcerated. That conclusion would lead you to the leftist version of antiprofessionalism in which “knowledge,” like “culture,” is an organic whole that gets carved up by evil disciplines and professions flourishing in the wake of multiversities and seeking to consolidate and fortify their private domains. But surprisingly, this position conflicts in telling ways with Clark Kerr’s conception of disciplines: far from construing academic depart-
ments as privatized domains of knowledge production, Kerr saw them as equal parties in an ensemble that has made the university "a prime instrument of national purpose" (87). That is, where the antiprofessionalist critique of the post–1968 multiversity mistakenly sees professionalism as the barrier that insulates the university from public life, Kerr (rightly) saw professionalism as the very device that increasingly integrates the university into the machinery of government and industry. The question, then, is not whether the university will serve the general public; the question is which structural and economic segments of the public will be served—and interpellated—by which academic disciplines.

Certainly the early student manifestos like Nanterre and, in this country, the SDS's Port Huron Statement were alive to this nationalist orchestration of disciplines. Disciplinarity in those works is rendered as an explicitly political effect, and is linked to paternalistic authority: disciplines discipline—and in doing so produce subjects of the national military state. The manifestos' rhetorical tropes cast unruliness as unfettered antdisciplinarity, fraternity as revolutionary antipaternalism, and the reform of the curriculum (literally, "the course of events") as a species of public activism. The concluding sections of the Port Huron Statement, for example, declare that

Social relevance, the accessibility to knowledge, and internal openness—these together make the university a potential base and agency in a movement of social change. . . . [N]ational efforts at university reform . . . must make fraternal and functional contact with allies in labor, civil rights, and other liberal forces outside the campus. They must import major public issues into the curriculum—research and teaching on problems of war and peace is an outstanding example. They must make debate and controversy, not dull pedantic cant, the common style for educational life. (73, 74)

"Debate and controversy," it is fair to say, have characterized the subsequent reform of disciplines, marked as that has been by what Steven Connor describes as the steady flow of "the new theoretical allegiances across disciplines." These allegiances, writes Connor,
are accompanied by a breakdown of the links between academic institutions and their national contexts. The language of the development of modern literary criticism began in England with a cultural analysis that sought to rescue and reformulate a myth of national identity to stand against the incursions of anonymous and international mass capitalism. In other areas, especially philosophy and art-criticism, clear and continuous national “traditions” were equally powerful constituents in the rise of academic disciplines. (17–18)

If Connor is right, the institutionalization of academic disciplines was part of an attempt not to atomize, but to *salvage* the “organic whole” of culture whose loss was mourned by the radical students at Berkeley.

We therefore think it’s more accurate (as well as more fruitful) to say that the academic incorporation of the New Left critique of disciplinariness has produced considerable involutions in fields, such that some disciplines now take the very institution of disciplinariness, *and* the relations between academic disciplines and their social milieu, as legitimate objects of inquiry. And we offer, as examples of this new mode of disciplinary self-interrogation, the multiple uses to which ethnography has been put in fields such as English, psychology, anthropology, sociology, and media studies. To suggest otherwise, we think—to suggest that the university has simply devoured and digested the New Left’s challenges to it in the 1960s without departing in the least from its rationalizing, technocratic agenda—is to ignore the establishment and endurance of extradisciplinary programs (again, women’s studies and African American studies are appropriate examples here), programs that, in the best of all academic worlds, play a role in hiring and promotion decisions, and in awarding undergraduate and graduate minors.

Overlooking these changes effectively disables one from producing a cogent account of intellectuals in the contemporary university. Take, for example, a recent book by Carl Boggs, *Intellectuals and the Crisis of Modernity*, which contains within its pages two diametrically opposed accounts of the humanities and social sciences in the age of the multiversity. The first of these, in a chapter entitled “The University, Modernity, and the Diffusion of Technocratic Discourse,” sounds as if it had been
Despite a quarter-century of critiques, challenges, and reforms, the multiversity that Kerr had in mind remains the hegemonic form of academic life in the 1990s. And the role of faculty has become even more technocratic than what Kerr described in his book. One could go further: the modern university is the locus of state-corporate management of education that administers and controls the production of knowledge. Virtually all forms of scholarship are saturated with a positivist world-view corresponding to this highly rationalized system. (111)

As Boggs describes it, the modern research university has fostered “a massive proliferation of disciplines and subdisciplines that are fragmented and disconnected from each other” (112), thereby rendering faculty unable to address issues of broad social concern. In such universities, Boggs writes, “the hostility to general, multidisciplinary frames of reference makes it difficult for any particular field of inquiry to establish linkages with other fields or address pressing social and political themes with depth and creative insight: capitalism, bureaucracy, racism, patriarchy, and ecological crisis, to name the most visible” (113). Citing Russell Jacoby as his primary witness, Boggs concludes that “the normal politics of university life invariably asserts itself over all but the most ambitious efforts at intellectual creativity” (117). It would appear, then, that only an extremely ambitious and creative professor of social sciences, like Boggs, could have written such a sentence in an academic book.

The problem isn’t merely that Boggs is mistaken about the research university; he’s certainly not wrong to note the prevalence of quantification, technical jargon, and statistical analysis in the social sciences that most aspire to being considered “hard” sciences (psychology, sociology, economics), and he’s not wrong to suggest that professional activity in those fields is often measured, as it is in the natural sciences, by the amount of external grant dollars one’s research has generated. The problem, instead, is that Boggs extends this analysis over every academic discipline, from those most fully integrated into the military-industrial
research apparatus to those like women's studies and English where "performative" criteria are harder to come by (and where researchers are rarely granted tenure on the basis of their ability to attract external funding). More than this, however, the problem is that Boggs's failure to ask about the status of his own work in the academic technocracy produces a very strange narrative in which "the university" is the agent of rationalization, but "higher education" is the locus of a new critical intelligentsia whose work does contest the reification and instrumentalization of knowledge. Only one chapter after characterizing the university as Clark Kerr's knowledge factory, Boggs writes,

In higher education, literally thousands of scholars in virtually every discipline have been influenced by themes and approaches drawn from the sixties milieu. The New Left preoccupation with ideology and consciousness, empowerment and community, cultural critique, and the transformation of personal life has entered the discourses of history, sociology, political science, anthropology, urban planning, comparative literature, and art history, in some cases precipitating a crisis of mainstream thinking. . . . This expansion in numbers and influence of critical intellectuals in American life over the past two decades is a development of great importance: oppositional discourse is no longer a rarity, despite more than a decade of Reaganism in national politics. (176)

We think Boggs is right about higher education and wrong about the university (indeed, it's interesting that he associates "dissidence" and "crisis" with the former term and technocracy with the latter). Because we would argue that what happened in the "sixties milieu" Boggs finally acknowledges here is that the humanities and the social sciences took on the challenges of Port Huron, Berkeley, and Nanterre—and they did so because the humanities and the social sciences provide the best disciplinary locations from which to theorize a social context for knowledge and thereby "dereify" knowledge. In this we mean to oppose the human sciences to the natural sciences, in which knowledge has to be reified if normal science is to generate testable criteria for itself. This may suggest that disciplines now distinguish themselves from the natural sciences to the extent they involve hermeneutic accounts of knowledge. That is,
historicist or contextualist or feminist or sociological accounts of science are not themselves sciences and do not aspire to the protocols of knowledge in the natural sciences (which is one reason they have met with such hostility from some scientists, as in Norman Levitt and Paul Gross’s infamous *Higher Superstition: The Academic Left and Its Quarrels with Science*). It was just such a recognition of the defining role of hermeneutics that guided us when our Unit for Criticism and Interpretive Theory sought to clarify its scope and purpose a few years ago: it was agreed that all disciplines were potentially relevant to the Unit and vice versa, so long as they involve a component of interpretive theory—thus excluding purely statistical “theories” in econometrics or quantitative sociology.

It is worth noting that the form of interdisciplinarity characterized by the Unit for Criticism and Interpretive Theory operates through centralization, and in so doing serves an important function in our university. By formally bringing together, through zero-time appointments, faculty members from disciplines engaged in some degree by theorized recursivity, the Unit has helped produce dialogue spoken in a kind of esperanto based in shared hermeneutic practices. This dialogue, occurring not only in weekly seminars but also in cross-listed and jointly taught courses, acts as a hedge against both reification and performativity. Another kind of more-than-disciplinary academic unit—typified by women’s studies, African American studies, Latino-Latina studies, and the like—works somewhat differently. These units also bring together like-minded faculty from far-flung disciplines, but their primary goal lies in another direction, that is, to place within a variety of departments a number of jointly hired faculty members contracted to teach a percentage of courses addressing women or gender studies or feminist theory, in the case of women’s studies, or African American culture, race theory, diaspora, colonialism, and so forth, in the case of African American studies. And while it might be argued (as critics have done) that individual faculty members in most humanities and social sciences departments would be inclined to teach courses like these whether or not the campus had a women’s studies program or an African American studies program, the actual existence of these programs insures curricular attention, institutionalizes it, puts money (however meagerly) behind it, and partially
diverts curricular control away from individual departments and disciplinary protocols.\textsuperscript{4}

Where the Unit for Criticism and Interpretive Theory draws its directives almost entirely from within the academy, women’s studies programs and African American studies programs have always maintained ties with outside constituencies. This “external-ness”—precisely the legacy of 1960s inside/outside agitation, as we have noted—periodically becomes the target of criticism by opponents of women’s studies programs (for example) who charge that such programs produce mere “pseudoscholarship” in the interest of political activism. To take a recent and egregious example, Daphne Patai and Noretta Koertge’s \textit{Professing Feminism} concludes its call for the abolition of women’s studies by consigning “advocacy” to the street where it belongs:

Students and faculty should be encouraged to fight sexism and other injustices on their campuses and beyond, but they should not expect to receive academic credit or tenure for doing so. . . . Advocacy is often appropriate, sometimes necessary, in the street. But in the classroom, the more flexible values of liberal education should prevail. (210)

It is hard to see how the values of liberal education can be called “more flexible” when they explicitly mandate the prohibition of feminist scholarship. Whether some women’s studies programs (or some aspects of women’s studies programs) are wholly given over to mere “advocacy” we aren’t prepared to say, but in the ones we know best, intellectual integrity is actually \textit{reinforced} by an interdisciplinary structure: jointly hired faculty members teach out of their home departments, which are in turn jointly responsible for evaluating scholastic work.

The broader issue at stake here, of course, has to do with the function of critical intellectuals and extra- or interdisciplinary knowledges in the postmodern university. It would be a mistake, we think, to take Lyotard and Boggs at face value, and say simply that the state of knowledge in the postmodern era is defined by the technocratic functions of the multiversity. As Boggs unwittingly demonstrates, this narrative leaves you with no consistent way of accounting for the presence of analyses like
Boggs's in social science, just as it fails to account for the profusion of critics in English departments who interrogate the institutional status of literary study—Bruce Robbins, Paul Bové, Anne Ruggles Gere, Richard Ohmann, Gerald Graff, and so on. The prevalence of this kind of meta-institutional criticism, we suggest, is the result of how the humanities and social sciences took on the critiques of the university mounted at Berkeley and Columbia and Michigan and Nanterre; and if this is so, then the institutionalization of these critiques has not defused them but disseminated them through the disciplines—such that the history of disciplinarity itself is now among some disciplines' objects of study (as in investigations of the "constructedness" of philosophy, anthropology, history, English, law, sociology, and so on).  

In our emphasis on the literal "externality" of disciplines we differ not only from Stanley Fish but also, and more markedly, from Antony Easthope. Easthope's *Literary into Cultural Studies* sees the field of English as having been transformed entirely from within by the advent of theory, which, he claims, has rendered untenable literary study's foundational distinction between high and mass culture, "literary" and "ordinary" language. We agree that theories of literariness are not merely coeval with but fundamental to the creation of departments of organized literary study in the Anglo-American world; even in a relatively late text like Northrop Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism* one can see a somewhat strained attempt to sequester literary study from the incursions of other "extraneous" disciplines by insisting on criticism's primary pigment:

> The axioms and postulates of criticism . . . have to grow out of the art it deals with. . . . Critical principles cannot be taken over ready-made from theology, philosophy, politics, science, or any combination of these.

> To subordinate criticism to an externally derived critical attitude is to exaggerate the values in literature that can be related to the external source, whatever it is. (6–7)

It is precisely this faith in the organicity of the field—and the capacity of the field to be organized—that the profession of literary study no longer professes. But Easthope is surely mistaken in attributing disciplin-
ary change solely to the rise of theory. If Easthope is right that there has been a paradigm shift in literary study (and though we question the source of that shift we do agree that it has occurred), it surely consists in this: the profession is no longer content to investigate literariness, or that which is intrinsic to the field of literary study, but rather revels in its extradisciplinary promiscuity so long as it is enabled to interrogate literature in its social contexts, investigate literary history as institution, and investigate the history of the institution of literary study. Neoconservatives, we contend, are closer to the mark than is Easthope when they suspect that these developments have their roots in the 1960s. Feminism, Marxism, new historicism, cultural materialism, cultural studies, queer theory: these enterprises share, if they share nothing else, a commitment to theorizing the social context of cultural production—a commitment so broad, in some cases, that literature disappears into the larger field of the social, and is addressed by way of Gramsci and Batman, monarchy and penal codes, race riots and Balinese cockfights.

We realize it could be argued that in turning its attention to culture, English is only doing again what it has always done in the past. We believe there's some element of truth in this—which is why everyone from Terry Eagleton to Steven Mailloux to E. D. Hirsch can claim to have called literary study to return to its roots in the ancient study of rhetoric. For as Eagleton, Connor, Easthope, and many others have pointed out, the premise of English studies was ambiguous from the outset: in Great Britain, with Leavis, Empson, and Richards, as in the United States, with Brooks, Ransom, and Tate, literary study's methodological formalism was always hooked up to a broader theory of the whole, organic culture to be recovered by means of literary study. Surely we will not pretend to believe that Wordsworth or Arnold did not sufficiently interrogate the concept of "culture." But we have no way of knowing whether the emergent dispensation—that is, the dispensation of cultural studies—is definitely either a revolution or a restoration; scholars in the Renaissance can claim that they always studied culture, just as writing instructors and historically minded eighteenth-century scholars can insist they were doing cultural studies before anyone heard of it in the United States; but this may be just one more trompe l'oeil of
"change," thanks to which it looks to those inside the discipline as if the outside of the discipline really was inside all along.

But what does it matter whether one locates change inside or outside the discipline? Aren't these alternatives illusory, since disciplinary borders are so permeable that their outsides are in and their insides are out? And wasn't the Nanterre Manifesto launched at the humanities and social sciences from the outset, and therefore, as Fish might say, already "inside" the fields it challenged?

We contend, first of all, that it does indeed matter how you tell these stories as tales in or out of school. It matters theoretically, because if there isn't an "outside" to the discipline, then your account of change, like Easthope's or Fish's, can simply adopt Kuhn's structure wholesale, and concoct a narrative wherein paradigm development inevitably produces anomaly and forces revolution regardless of external social variables such as funding, student populations, national agendas, and influential manifestos. And it matters practically, because if you don't have an account of the discipline's "outside," you can't have any sense of its potential constituencies. It's for this reason that we prefer Boggs's account of disciplinary change to Easthope's, because for all its contradictions it rightly foregrounds the social movements of the 1960s, in concert with the expansion of the universities, as precipitates of the contemporary crises in the humanities and social sciences.

Our argument, then, is this. The evolution of the modern multiversity had at its source two principal imperatives: to accommodate new student populations and to produce research (and researchers) of use to national security and global economic competition. Under both headings, the university was put, as Clark Kerr said, into the service of the nation: in democratizing higher education, expanding the franchise to previously excluded populations, as well as in militarizing higher education and providing research and development for the postwar economic boom. Indeed, in the 1990s it is now beginning to look as if the former movement, democratization, was predicated on the latter, militarization. Be that as it may, this vast social change produced the conditions for the dismantling of—or at least the institutional resistance to—the very system of technocratic performativity that sought to manage new student
populations as national human resources in the first place. We therefore see the postmodern university as radically porous, accommodating an outside that is its inside, but we do not want to make the mistake of seeing our own disciplinary transformation from literature to culture as a purely intellectual matter of new paradigms and theories developed from within out of the gradual obsolescence of the old.

Our argument does not end here, however. For it would be easy to celebrate the polymorphous perversity of English, and to call an end to the oppressive regime of disciplinarity once and for all, if it weren’t for the collapse of the academic job market. If times were flush we could say that English has laid claim once again to being the queen of the disciplines, rightly generating conservative attacks and recruiting new, engaged students to the field in record numbers, and we could be happy, proud, and downright smug. But a bear market as severe as this one throws the profession’s standards of value into turmoil, because (as chapter 4 argued) there are now so comparatively few institutional locations for so many different kinds of work. Our ideal aspirations of post-disciplinariness are therefore constantly contradicted by the exigencies of our fiscal austerity. Such a state of affairs, we believe, is harmful not only to the university’s intellectual future but also to its present mechanics; that is to say, the contradiction between interdisciplinary expansion and fiscal contraction has grave consequences for graduate programs, hiring and tenure, and peer review at every level—all the forms of professional self-regulation (and intellectual self-definition) we have.

It could not be more important in the current climate, therefore, that universities and legislatures be persuaded to preserve and foster interdisciplinary units—whatever programs, institutes, and centers generate hybrid and critical forms of knowledge whose uses are not foreordained by national policy. We find it bitterly ironic that so post-literary a theorist as Tony Bennett, who has called for greater attention to policy in cultural studies, would criticize progressive intellectuals for opposing governmental calls for “a greater stress on skills and competency trainings in higher education”—as if such a strategy were self-evidently revanchist and reactionary: “the readiness of cultural studies intellectuals to fall into line behind traditional defences of the humanities as a form of education...
which exceeds the mundane calculus that the notions of skills, trainings and competencies imply," according to Bennett, is "most disappointing" ("Being 'In the True'" 235). What's odd about this is that Bennett ostensibly wants to move his field (and ours) outside literature to culture and policy, but in advocating an idea of the intellectual as "technical exemplar" and inveighing against the "useless" knowledges he considers (along with Ian Hunter) to be oppressive regimes of person formation, Bennett seems to have misread the lessons of the past thirty years rather dramatically, so much so that he's now in the anomalous position of proposing that all intellectual enterprises in the humanities be handed over to the proponents of performativity. In opposing the Faculty of Dead Letters, it seems, Bennett has merely proposed that we join the Faculty of Human Relations. No strategy could be more self-defeating for American critical intellectuals in the academy, who need, in these straitened times, every political and rhetorical opportunity to keep open and thriving those interdisciplinary units through which knowledge can circulate such that its directions and goals can be neither predicted nor controlled. And we insist on this commitment to interdisciplinarity not because it is an end in itself, but because we know that in the modern research university, it is one important way to keep alive the attempt to dereify knowledge; it is one of the few ways we can value even those knowledges that do not immediately serve the purposes of the state.

NOTES
1. For a synoptic (and thoroughly interdisciplinary) overview of the history of disciplinariness in higher education, see Messer-Davidow, Shumway, and Sylvan, Knowledges: Historical and Critical Studies in Disciplinarity.
2. For a recent and eloquent restatement of the intellectual imperative to dereify knowledge as it is produced in universities, see Readings.
3. See Starr, however, for a thorough account of the role played by the Nanterre and Mai '68 movements with regard to subsequent developments in French social theory.
4. As Ellen Rooney has written, "The creation of women's studies programs entails a specifically feminist critique of the disciplines. This critique is predominantly anti-essentialist and attacks the common-
sense view of disciplinary discourse as at least potentially objective in its representation of the real” (21).

5. This is not to say that the dissemination of New Left critiques in the contemporary university cannot be made to work for the forces of technocracy; as Steven Connor points out,

The forms of interdisciplinarity which result from this exchange of [critical] languages and [intellectual] concepts are often claimed as postmodern destabilizations of the structures of knowledge. But this argument could be put the other way around. The form of interdisciplinarity which has been fostered across the social sciences and humanities by the vehicle of the postmodernism debate can also be seen as attempts to master the field, coercing it into intellectual performativity. (42–43)

Bill Readings’s analysis of “the University of Excellence,” in which all disciplines and faculty specializations are welcome so long as they are “excellent” (that is, amenable to quantitative administrative review of some kind or usable for the machinery of “prestige”), suggests that Connor’s dystopian reading of interdisciplinarity will be altogether germane to the university of the twenty-first century. At the same time, Berkeley Free Speech Movement activist Bradford Cleaveland’s declaration that “the most salient characteristic of the ‘multiversity’ is massive production of specialized excellence” (75) suggests that Readings’s dystopian reading of the university, like Lyotard’s, has its roots in Berkeley and Nanterre.