

studies must be accorded with the demands of teaching close reading, a task that Middle English texts render more difficult. This negotiation is colored by my enjoyment of the minutiae of versification and poetic technique, an appreciation that more theoretically oriented colleagues view as a peccadillo. I fear that in the teaching of poetry, what has been lost with the advent of cultural studies is attention to literary and linguistic detail, which is too often sacrificed on the altar of contextualizing the text in a broader interdisciplinary framework.

If the analysis of poetic technique has been lost for modern English literature, it has been buried and forgotten for Middle English works. This burial has been hastened by colleagues who teach Chaucer in translation so students can concentrate on modern critical methodologies without having to deal with linguistic complexities. Ironically, however, this choice flouts the goals of cultural studies, since translators often aim to make their texts resemble colloquial modern English and thus reinforce it as the norm. When Chaucer's language looks contemporary, readers inevitably tend to make him into a modern author (a danger against which the feminist critic Elaine Tuttle Hansen effectively warns in *Chaucer and the Fictions of Gender* [Berkeley: U of California P, 1992]). Moreover, translations tend to sacrifice the elaborate commentary and critical apparatuses that explain the author's authority and thereby make Chaucer more fully available to analysis by cultural studies. *The Riverside Chaucer*, the standard Middle English text of his literary corpus, with its textual variants, explanatory notes, and glossary, teaches students not only what Chaucer was (in its biography and sections on manuscript history) but also what he is: a poet who has been read and studied for six hundred years. This knowledge is part and parcel of the academic culture of modern readers and must be open to examination if cultural studies is to be self-evaluative.

At the center of the cultural baggage in *The Riverside Chaucer* is the conventional representation of Chaucer as "father of English poetry." This phrase has been only two-thirds unpacked since cultural studies came to medieval studies. Chaucer's patriarchal place in the literary canon and his Englishness (as well as his usefulness to English nation builders) have received a good deal of attention, but his poetry as poetry has not been fully scrutinized through the lens of cultural studies. At its best, critical attention to the mechanics of poetry has never been an end in itself—it serves a larger argument, and part of that argument should assert that poetic technique functions as the cultural currency in which poets trade, giving poems some of their initial value. If readers begin to see poetic technique in this light, they confront it as an issue of language and power of the type examined by

Pierre Bourdieu, and as such the poetic elements of a poem have not only particularized instantiations within the work but also broader cultural meanings.

For example, describing the battle between Palamon's and Arcite's forces, Chaucer's Knight fills a twelve-line passage with alliteration that parodies a native poetic tradition (e.g., "With myghty maces the bones they tobreste. / He thurgh the thikkeste of the throng gan threste . . ." [2611–12]). In my Chaucer class we discuss how this alliteration reinforces the violence of the scene, particularly with plosives. Then we examine a sample of Middle English alliterative verse and peek ahead to the Parson's rejection of "rum-ram-ruf" ornamentation as inappropriate to his high seriousness. I next ask my students why Chaucer, a London poet drawing largely from Continental sources, parodies an English tradition from the provinces, and the northern provinces at that, and what it means that he bests the alliterative poets by doing what they do but in rhymed couplets as well.

Professors who teach poetry written in English should integrate the study of prosody and form into the larger goals of cultural studies. These aspects recommended the poetry to its earlier readers, giving it the authority that earned it a place in the university classroom. I hope that the revitalized examination of poetic technique will find reconfigured and therefore renewed importance in scholarly discourse.

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According to Lawrence Grossberg, cultural studies describes and mediates the discourses that relate everyday lives to the social structure (*It's a Sin: Postmodernism, Politics and Culture* [Sydney: Power, 1988] 22). Presumably, one aim of this type of cultural studies is to transform the structures of social power. Yet the many directions that the field has taken—for example, investigating scientific discourse as well as mass culture and popular entertainment—make it a broad target for criticism, distrust, and antagonism, as the controversy surrounding Alan Sokal's hoax article in *Social Text* makes clear ("Transgressing the Boundaries—Toward a Transformative Hermeneutics of Quantum Gravity," *Social Text* 14 [1996]: 217–52).

Cultural studies' relation with literary studies in the academy has often resembled that between matter and antimatter on *Star Trek*. Though they cannot touch without a universe-destroying explosion, they exist in an intimate relation that fuels the ship. It has been argued that the distinction between the literary and cultural studies serves to maintain the notion of the literary—of literature as defined by the traditional canon and by the privileging

of high textual culture over popular or low or mass culture. Fortunately, this false dichotomy is being slowly dismantled not only by the rise of cultural studies intellectually and institutionally but also from within literary studies by many modernist and postmodernist scholars. The title of Antony Easthope's *Literary into Cultural Studies* constructs a grammatical (if not a political) imperative that literary studies incorporate cultural studies. His argument strongly implies that this type of close relation between cultural and literary studies will provide the remodeling of paradigms needed for literary studies to confront the political issues of race, class, and gender.

Talking to a few graduate students about cultural studies, as I did at the University of Washington, makes one realize that it is here (in the discipline) to stay. While I share their stance, my views developed independently of any formalized program in cultural studies, and consequently I know little about the institutional study of popular culture (how many classes in it are offered nationwide, their theoretical backgrounds, their appropriateness for the undergraduate curriculum, or their relation to the literary culture of my English department). Through my textual research and teaching in medieval literature, I have concluded that further credible scholarly work on the relation between literary and cultural studies is required for either to advance. This work must focus on the borderland between the two areas in order to uncover the political issues holding them in tension and to forge a better working relation between them. The two fields should not become a single unit, because each is extensive and diverse and has a unique intellectual history. Their impossible but present opposition has to be kept in mind.

In my work I have arrived at my own provisional definitions of the literary and the cultural. Trained in literary studies, I found myself working on historical documents and bits of material culture, objects that caused me to rethink my training even as I applied it to them. Though medieval popular culture differs from its postmodern counterpart, the act of bridging the gap between the literary and the cultural in both periods is the same. Thus, I have also pursued an active interest in the modern daytime serialized drama on television and its contribution to feminist thought. I find it energizing to deal with a popular cultural artifact as a type of radical literary text. Both literary and cultural studies are transformed and improved when the difficult border between them is crossed.

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Cultural studies seems to make many literature departments uncomfortable, perhaps because most of its formu-

lations reveal the partiality of disciplinary paradigms by including a strong critique of what specific approaches enable and elide. This critique is visible, for example, in Raymond Williams's famous reconceptualization of culture as everyday social practice rather than the elite product of society, which encouraged the study of popular cultural forms and of overlooked authors, foregrounded the possibility that disciplinary agendas reflect their founders' cultures, and opened the canon debates. Yet although this critique need not inhibit collaboration between cultural studies and the literary, these two intellectual pursuits with many vital connections are now often antagonistic toward each other. This is unfortunate, for I think that cultural studies embodies the essential elements of the literary project: an appreciation for the ways that people use their creativity to explore the world around them, a fundamental belief in the importance of the imaginative realm to material reality, and an attention to the use of language and aesthetics in literary and extraliterary spaces. After all, central cultural studies insights on the construction of subjectivity, the role of narrative in discourses of ideological affiliation, such as nationality, and the structuring function of signs arose from literary, or at least text-based, studies. Moreover, by striving to situate the object of study in the web of historical relations that determined its production, reception, and internal functioning, cultural studies provided a bridge to disciplines and materials that have enriched literary analysis.

In my work, I have used both literary and cultural studies approaches. My current project aims to understand how literary works functioned in cold war society, where specific binary oppositions were repeatedly displaced and constantly re-presented in diverse cultural and social spheres, including the literary. I focus on literature that was labeled subversive, for these marginal works most clearly reveal the social norms and conventions of the time by breaking them. In interpreting the often extreme responses to certain works of literature in the United States of the 1950s, I have had to examine both the texts' internal, artistic workings and their historical context to account for the behavior of the literary establishment, the reading public, and governmental investigators. A separation of literary from cultural study would be insupportable in this research, as would doing either one exclusively.

The textual methodology I use depends on techniques of close reading and of attention to rhetoric, tropes, language, tone, nuance, and implication that come from my literary training. Since cold war rhetoric often worked indirectly, through popular metaphors and clichés, the scripts the media followed when talking about certain