Globalization, Democracy and English Studies

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1. Globalization has been seen by both its promoters and detractors primarily as an expansion of global capital and money and commodity markets across national and regional borders, driving both capitalized and capital poor economies towards consumer-oriented production whose backward and forward linkages are determined – indeed manipulated – by developed economies of the West. In the process, traditional modes of production of weaker economies are neglected, which, in the end, lose out to high value production processes and products backed up by sophisticated technology and financial instruments. The deceptive investment portfolios from the West, described rather quizzically as "footloose capital," gain control of weaker economies and threaten to withdraw in the event of a government taking measures to protect its domestic business. The promotion of supply side and transnational economies has the ultimate goal of a market-led integration of global society. As Jurgen Habermas points out, "a state enmeshed in the transnational economic system would abandon its citizens to the legally secured negative freedoms of global competition, while essentially confining itself to providing, in business-like fashion, infrastructures that promote entrepreneurial activity and make national economic conditions attractive from the point of view of profitability" (78,79-80). Those opposed to globalization see in the power of the runaway markets -- and the involvement of the United States in World Trade Organization (WTO) negotiations with governments to pursue

market-friendly policies – the inevitability of the loss of autonomy of national states, and an erosion of their decision-making abilities. Indeed globalization's war cry now is "more market, less state interventions;" its aim is to see a free market society along with a minimal state. In countries that are variously described as third world, less developed or of weak economies, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and their less well-off but equally high-handed cousin, the Asian Development Bank, work as allies of the forces of hegemonic globalization.

The word hegemony brings us to a consideration of how globalization impacts on a broad range of areas on a daily basis, such as migration and travel, the media, information technology, education, culture and lifestyle, and cultural economy. Education for example, is increasingly valued in a global context, to the extent that individual states, either by force of necessity or by the lure of finding a place in the global system, now pursue American models in their higher education. Private universities in Bangladesh, for example, have a Fall semester conducted during a season when leaves turn a bit brownish at best, but don't fall en masse. Call it a name game, but it speaks volumes of the kind of US educational hegemony we are witnessing around the globe. This errant example apart, however, one has to recognize the dominance of US-led educational enterprises in setting qualifying standards for English language proficiency (TOEFL, for example), designing models of tertiary level curricula, making available doctoral and post-doctoral studies and research opportunities, and even authenticating style manuals for research for a global constituency. As in the economic and technological aspects of globalization, this dominance is leading to homogenization and marginalization – homogenization of local educational practices into a global model, and where local practices are resistant, their marginalization and disempowerment. According to Arjun Appadurai, "globalization involves the use of a variety of instruments of homogenization (armaments, advertising technologies, language hegemonies, clothing styles and the like) which are absorbed in local political and cultural economies" (303). Appadurai, however, maintains that "globalization of culture is not the same as its homogenization," (303) and offers to read globalization's complex interface with local cultures in terms of a tension that releases different "scapes"– ethnoscape, mediascape, etc – that continuously add variety within and outside national boundaries. It is difficult, however, to see such scapes interacting outside of their usual binary constraints (for example, US vs. Bangladeshi mediascapes, or, the first world vs. third world ethnoscapes where the first party of the binary is always privileged).

Appadurai's mention of language hegemony will be relevant to my discussion of the state of English Studies in the post 9/11 world. But before going into that, I'd like to look at a related issue that is providing globalization a new momentum: the New World Order (NWO) and the various configurations of power relations that it has put into place. An understanding of these configurations will also help us locate the nexus between power and knowledge that increasingly defines NWO and add to changes and transformations in cultural and academic discourses including English Studies. In this paper, I'll consider NWO in geo-political and economic terms, avoiding the conspiracy theories such as the one put forward by Takis Fotopoulos who, in his essay, "`Democracy` in the New World Order" maintains that the transnational elite – the *Illuminanti* of the conspiracy theorists – are trying to "implant western models of democracy in vulnerable countries against resistance solely for their own gain" (5). This elite group, he believes, has both power and control over the instruments of international trade and capital, multinational corporations, digital and information technology, various international organizations and even some UN agencies. These are strongly supported by the military-industrial complexes of stronger nations and blocks (G8, for example) and are constantly redefining not only systems of governance e.g., democracy, but also economy, and the market (e.g., unbridled consumerism) culture (the influx of western visual culture and the dominance of western media) and education in countries that are now under their sway. Fotopoulos believes that "the transnational elite does not hesitate now to proceed to the next step: to rewrite History and, in the process, to condemn (and tomorrow to penalize) every anti-systemic ideology." (5)

Ever since the term New World Order became a geopolitical reality after the cessation of cold war and the rise of the US-centric unipolar world, it has also become a part of US political rhetoric. Starting with the senior George Bush, political leaders, political analysts and media pundits – all have had their own take on NWO that has ranged from idealism to opportunism to caution. What has been commonly recognized though, is the unipolar nature of NWO, and, along with it, new realities such as the birth of new nation states (after the breakdown of the Soviet Republic and Yugoslavia); ethnic conflicts and the emergence of new flashpoints in the world; the rise of religious fundamentalism and, of course, the threat of what Habermas describes as "spontaneous border crossings" (for example, security risks connected with sophisticated and large-scale technologies, organized crime, arms trafficking etc.) (77). On the economic front, footloose capital rushed to fill the void left by the expiring centrally planned economies in the erstwhile Soviet Russia, and also sought newer grounds, such as

China and India which promised ample return. Broadly speaking, some of the issues that underpin any discussion of globalization and democracy today are: the dominance of market philosophy and an ever increasing global capital flow influencing a whole range of things – from national economic decisions and monetary policies to lifestyle; a proliferation of visual culture and the increasing impact of the media, accelerated migration from Asia and Eastern Europe to USA, UK and the European Union countries, and a mobile positioning of the various diasporas, a local/global interface that has created grounds for newer hybridization of culture and lifestyle, a reconfiguration of some older binaries such as metropolis/periphery, north/south, accompanied by both a strengthening of privileged parties of the binaries, as well as the phenomenon of striking back by the disprivileged parties that also calls for resistance to globalization's homogenizing logic.

Although the economic aspect of globalization and NWO has been much commented upon there have also been strong misgivings amongst multiculturists about their totalizing and homogenizing logic. George Bush's "Us vs. them" stand after 9/11 seems to have put all ethnic, racial, class and cultural differences into a largely US (and by association, Euro) ethnoracial mix which on the one hand, would fuse all differences for a happy Americanism, and on the other, create spurious multiulturism along paradigm maps charted by power agencies (state cultural bodies, the media and academia). In a bid to give such fake multiculturalism a politically correct stand, supporters of NWO began to call it "globally local multiculturism" or "strategic multiculturism." Multiculturists battling the demons of monoculturism consider this new multiculturism oppressive and warn against the many faces such oppression can take. Indeed, resistance against such oppression in the heyday of globalization is seen not just in the so-called third world countries, but in the big powers' home territories as well. This is amply demonstarted in massive, and often violent, protests every time the WTO (which now appears to be the flagship of new international monetary and trade order) meets, and, in more recent "Occupy Wall Street" and "Occupy Everything" movements. Americans also had to lose or compromise on many of their civil rights after Bush's war against terror took a decisive turn in the aftermath of the US invasion of Iraq. The media, particularly newspapers and TV channels pursuing the kind of embedded journalism CNN practiced during the Iraq war, have been persuaded to play the patriotic card in reporting on the war, and on terrorism in general. This is continuing even today, with little substantive change during a supposedly more benign Obama administration.

Resistance in cultural fields however, is less spectacular than in areas of political activism; it is also, to some extent, uncertain. Such resistance has taken the form of avoidance (of things that clash with local culture), revivalism (of traditional cultural forms to counter cross-border "sub-cultural" production) or restitution (an increasing interest in mother languages, local literatures and forms of culture as a way of recovering the ground lost to dominant global literatures and cultures). But the important thing is, such resistance continues even as opposition from the establishment mounts.

The confrontation-resistance debate centering on globalization has spilled into many areas, such as culture, where the fear of a strong visual culture emanating from the west cannibalizing global diversity remains a persistent fear. In English Studies, too, the confrontation-resistance dialectic has added new dimensions to its already mutating landscape. But before I take a close look at the landscape, it remains for me to cover the one remaining concept - democracy - forming the discursive frame of the paper. Democracy, by the very definitional parameters attached to it, is essentially pluralistic, liberal, non-coercive, accountable and hence transparent, secular, and oriented towards public good. Advocates of democracy such as Jermy Bentham (1748-1832) and James Mill (1773-1836) considered liberal democracy "nothing but a logical requirement for the governance of a society, freed from absolute power and tradition, in which individuals have endless desires…" (Held: 25). However, for democracy to function according to the ideals mentioned above, there are certain instrumental requirements that every democratic polity agrees upon. Habermas sets out four such instruments which he describes as "preconditions" for an "association of citizens …… to regulate their coexistence democratically and to shape social conditions by political means:"

> an "effective political apparatus" through which to implement binding decisions;"
>
> "a clearly defined 'self' for 'political self-determination and self transformation…."
>
> A willing citizenry who "can be mobilized for participation in political opinion-formation and will-formation oriented to the common good," and
>
> "an economic and social milieu" for a "dramatically programmed administration" to organize itself and enhance its legitimacy. (76)

The reason I have picked up Habermas from among scores of commentators on democracy is that he takes a cautionary view of the modern state's capacity to sustain its three essential prerogatives – its capacity for control, its legitimacy and its organizational functions – in the face of global capitalism. The four preconditions that Habermas spells out for politics and society to coexist for an effective realization of democratic prerogatives are constantly under threat from forces of globalization. Such a situation problematizes the basic assumptions of democracy and raises a number of questions: How free is an individual in democracy? Do all citizens equally enjoy the broad cluster of rights a democratic society offers? How much freedom does an economically backward democratic country itself enjoy? Indeed, one may even posit that in many democracies, the state itself is responsible for producing and maintaining inequalities of everyday life. Democracy as a form of governance may be a logical choice, as Bentham and Mill maintained, but whether it delivers its promises depends a great deal on how it views itself, and what the dynamics are that provide its guiding force. Bentham and Mill themselves excluded women and the labouring class from democratic franchise, as did Jean Jacues Rousseau (1712-78), although in his case it was the poor rather than the labouring class which got the axe. More recently, questions have been raised about the agency of state institutions and even citizens themselves in articulating and controlling outcomes towards public good: should there be limits on the power of the *demos* to change and alter political circumstance? Should the nature and scope of liberty of individuals and minorities be left to democratic decision?"(Held: 179) Just as globalization is seen to be creating new inequalities everywhere – as it also empowers certain new regions to emerge as subsidiary power blocks (Asia Pacific, for example)– democracy is also seen to be skewed more towards the rich and the powerful in formal governance and material and distributional matters (social justice, for example) than the poor. This, in turn, consolidates the power of the elite, and creates subsidiary power bases for a collective manipulation of policies and programmes. And again, like the forces of globalization, democracy both unites and divides the people by keeping them eternally within a conflictual mould. The multi-party system of democracy – considered one of its pillars – is a formal arrangement of such a conflictual ethics.

When a democracy – particularly liberal democracy – distributes its fruits unevenly among the people, it exposes its various biases. A democratic polity has a dominant male and class bias; it is aligned towards the market and capital, and, of course, power. Even a country like India, considered the largest democracy in the world, there are obvious linguistic and religious biases that no government has

been able, or tried, to hide. In most democracies, there is often an intolerance of free press and a desire to use force in silencing dissent. These biases usually dictate governments' approach to social justice, education, culture and their policy regarding gender and ethnicity.

2. I have briefly attended to the widely debated issues of globalization, and along with the complex and contested notion of democracy in the hope that these will form a conceptual and historical background against which a mapping of English Studies can be done. Such an exercise will be both meaningful and practical since the discipline of English studies now embraces an expanding number of interrelated subjects, such as Cultural, Media and Communication Studies, all of which relate closely to the changing landscapes of economy and culture – both local and global. As if the language-literature divide within English Studies were not contentious enough, the introduction of this broad range of studies has brought newer uncertainties about the continuation of literature studies – as the subject was known until even three decades ago. The questions that become inevitable now are: will literature be displaced by a plethora of new disciplines that have thrived after the introduction of theory, which itself has been necessitated by a shift towards deconstruction and away from the essentialism that marked the general mood of the intellectually rebellious 1960s and 1970s? Will English Studies subsume other subjects as it continues to give pride of place to literature? Will literature lead the way towards an expanding interdisciplinary study, broader than English Studies, incorporating newly emerging fields of culture and society? While there are no clear answers to these questions, some hints and clues can be deciphered in reviewing the changing nature of English studies over the decades, its embracing of cultural and media studies at a juncture of history which also saw the rise of globalization, the end of the cold war era, and the beginning of global transformation weakening nation states. It is important therefore to relate English studies to the tensions, confrontations and fissures, as well as energies, and dynamics that have characterized the global scene in the last four decades.

3. English Studies locates itself in this critical juncture as a ground where shocks from global transformations can be absorbed and new configurations of our experience can be articulated. It is also a ground that offers newer opportunities of assimilation, adjustment, innovation and change in keeping with emerging aspirations and needs. There was a time when English Studies was accused of complicity with colonial forces in their efforts to intellectually subjugate the colonized people. Such suspicion remained long after territorial decolonization was achieved. One remembers Ngugi wa Thiong'o's strong stand against English

and some European languages for destroying African linguistic traditions and his branding of English departments in the universities of his native Kenya, as in other decolonized countries, as colonial outposts. But there was also an equally passionate defense of English from a whole range of writers and scholars including Nirad C. Chaudhuri and Chinua Achebe. Negotiating these opposing stands is a middle view, which considers English and English studies as what they stand for, and the possibilities of communication and creative engagement they offer. Even before the rise of the new generation of Indo-Anglican writers led by Salman Rushdie who initiated a move for the Empire to write back to the Centre which, according to Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, is "a process by which the language, with its power, and the writing, with its signification of authority, has been wrested far from the dominant European culture" (8), there were misgivings about the politics of English language and its colonial association. It is generally agreed that beginning in the 1960s, English was losing its institutional authority and power. As Rivkin and Ryan put it, English could no longer "present itself as a repository of good values or of appropriate style if those values were connected to …Imperial violence" (852). However, they also maintain that, "Scholars began to take note of the fact that many great works of English literature promoted beliefs and assumptions regarding other geographic regions and ethnic groups" (852). Indeed, reading English Literature postcolonially has enabled many to discover in some classical writers and texts a pattern of questioning certain colonial ideologies, institutions and power relations. Shakespeare's *The Tempest* is one such example where he even critiques the colonial episteme. Such postcolonial undertakings have opened up areas of intellectual debate, where questions of identify, marginality, hybridity, representation, race, domination and resistance – the substance of post colonial theory, in short – are discussed, and from where the Empire is also continuously writing back to the Centre in the very language of the Centre. Roberto Fernandez Retamar, a noted cultural activist of post-revolutionary Cuba maintains, in one of his passionate essays, that the Calibans the colonizers had left behind are now writing back to them in their own language in what appears to be an ironic inversion of canonical overtures by the colonizers. In an evocative passage of his essay, "Caliban: Notes towards a Discussion of Culture in Our Americas" Retamar writes: "Prospero invaded the islands, killed our ancestors, enslaved Caliban, and taught him his language to make himself understood. What else can Caliban do but use that same language – today he has no other – to curse him, to wish that the 'red plague' would fall on him?" (24). But Caliban's cursing today can take many shapes – it has indeed created a space for protest literatures of various kinds, but also a whole literature industry based on other Englishes. As other Englishes come to prominence in

different parts of the world, English as the language of the colonialists has to undergo profound changes, divesting itself of a large part of its colonial cultural luggage. English is also the language for many Asian and African diasporic writers which they use to articulate their experience of displacement, marginalization and their in-betweenness, although they have to deal with – and often use to their advantage – the general perception of foreignness of their English. Thus English Studies today is a location for transnational and transcultural dialogue, and is assuming an essentially multicultural and multiethnic character. Bob Pope in *The English Studies Book* lists a number of developments showing the difference between, what he calls 'traditional' and 'progressive' uses of the language. A few of the differences he mentions are:

'Traditional'	'Progressive'
English for employment	English for 'life'
Promotion of single standard language	Recognition of varieties
Emphasis on writing	Emphasis on speech
Canon of 'great works'	Open or no canon
Single dominant cultural	Multicultural differences (31).

In the 1960s English literature was still concerned primarily with canonical texts, and the dominant ideology it pursued was monocultural and Eurocentric, although it did have a radical vision influenced by leftist views of the time, and a Sartrean commitment to freedom. But soon, 'progressive' notions of literary studies began to replace older paradigms, due largely to the "'cannon debates' and 'culture wars'" (Pope 15), of 1970s and beyond, pressure from the market (which enlarged the English language teaching front) and the politics of English language which involved recasting of the Englishness of English studies "by economic, political, military and cultural deference to the United States" (Sinfield: 225). Another powerful agent of change was theory, and Alan Sinfield tells us how, as theory ruled, "Many prized texts, inspected in the earnest light of multiculturism, feminism and gay liberation appeared racist, misogynist and homophobic. Furthermore, many texts were suddenly perceived as embedded in an essentialist, redemptionist vision, in which 'man' figured as a central but fixed entity" (xvii-xviii). The essentially deconstructive bent of theory was instrumental in encouraging a poststructuralist and, eventually, postmodern engagement with texts – both within and outside the canon. This also led to an interface between literature and culture that multiculturists particularly welcomed. Although

supporters of the great canonical tradition still remain (Harold Bloom is a case in point), the general shift is noticeably towards an interdisciplinary approach within English studies. As Brian Doyle wrote in *English and Englishness* in 1989, "The study of English will…provide a creative base for active experiments with cultural production (verbal, visual and aural) which enhance, improve and diversify rather than narrow and homogenize our cultural life"(142).

My own experience of teaching, and designing syllabus for a number of public and private universities tells me that English Studies, without losing its central focus – which is English literature and language – is slowly but surely moving towards cultural and media studies, theory and post-theory – in the sense of theory in practice. The English department of Dhaka University introduced theory in the late 1980s and postmodern literature only about ten years ago. Brac University, where I have taught postmodern American, Latin American and French literature (in translation) courses at the Masters level, also offers courses on Visual Culture, World Englishes and Feminism. Undergraduate students there have a choice between literature, culture and media studies and linguistics. But despite the variety and wide range of courses at Brac University, and to some extent in Dhaka University, classics haven't yet lost out to texts that one or the other contemporary theory prefers or which have a contemporary appeal. Whether this preference for classics remains in the future depends on a number of factors: how other universities here and abroad fare in their curriculum design; how the marketplace values the current courses; or the state of intellectual and creative impulses that shape our choices and our priorities.

4. It now remains for me to discuss the importance English language studies and linguistics have assumed in the last few decades. When the department of English of Dhaka University was launched in 1921, it was customary to see literature and language as complementary and mutually supportive branches of the same discipline. It was generally agreed that learning literature was only meaningful when one had a grasp of language, and, similarly, learning language was only meaningful when one had a grasp of literature. The interdependence of literature and language was seen necessary for a balanced learning and teaching programme, but in reality, literature remained the dominant subject, with language playing a supportive role. It was only in the mid-1980s that Linguistics was introduced as a separate subject with ELT forming an important part. The progress of ELT in particular and Linguistics in general since then has been phenomenal, although English Literature has shown a decline. In Dhaka University, students can opt for literature or linguistics at the 4th year of undergraduate studies, and most go for

linguistics – that is, ELT. And after the private university boom began in the 1990s, which saw a preference for market-savvy subjects such as business and computer rather than a liberal education framework, English language also became a must-read subject. All private universities have English language as part of their undergraduate curriculum, but few offer literature courses. And literature courses, to be 'viable,' have been geared toward the market which means introducing a mix of subjects, including linguistics and business English, and excluding authors presumed to be 'difficult' or 'uninteresting.' Such load-shedding has seen the end of many canonical authors such as Spenser, Milton and Byron in private university curriculum, but in public universities too, they now exist in much truncated form. And with the introduction of semester system, which deals with literature in piecemeal fashion (four to five texts by four to five authors, or in rare cases, such as Shakespeare, four to five texts by one author), public universities might replicate private university philosophy, although without the danger of English literature being altogether taken off the academic packages they offer. The existing strength of English literature programmes, and an increasing demand for raising the number of seats in all the departments of all public universities will probably stave off such a move.

5. ELT, and, along with it, linguistics, will see further expansion as a huge market exists for it which is expanding phenomenally around the globe. A recent study points out to the emergence of new geolinguistic regions, in addition to the existic ones, where English enjoys the status of a privileged media and cultural language. The homogeneity in terms of English language use is bound to expand rather phenomenally, the study maintains, expanding the size of the English language market. (Sinclair, Jacka, Cunninghman, 1996). Besides USA, Great Britain, Canada, and Australia, India is an expanding geolinguistic region where English is a strong second language, while China and Japan are fast becoming major markets for English language. Besides, economies of scale and scope will always create newer demands, and some of these are already being met even in Bangladesh: a private university has started offering undergraduate degree in Business English (which also contains a course on Hospitality English), and courses on Call Centre English are being offered by many private language training centers. ELT enjoys hefty support from the British Council – which itself offers "English for Life" courses that are, by Bangladeshi standard, quite expensive. The British Overseas Development Agency, DFID, has also come up with a well funded programme to promote ELT and the "English for Life" concept in Bangladesh. I am sure ELT curriculum and teaching methodology will undergo significant changes in keeping with emerging demands. But so far, the

standard in both cases appear to have set by British and American Universities, and if there have been changes in the last few years, these have been mediated or supported by the British Council. ELT and linguistics curricula and teaching methodology will need some fundamental changes in view of the educational, and more particularly English language teaching realities, of Bangladesh, some of which the discipline will also share with literature. The English language proficiency of the entry level students in pubic universities is generally poor to dismal. My own assessment over the last few years is that as many as 8 out of 10-12 students I meet in my first year tutorials cannot write a paragraph without one or more mistakes in every sentence. Most of them cannot carry out a meaningful conversation in English, let alone give their opinions on an issue. They improve somewhat over the years, but not significantly. What, may I ask, is the use of teaching them discourse analysis when they cannot even come up with an elementary discourse in the language, even on a perfectly ordinary matter? Or, what, for that matter, is the use of teaching them Shakespeare, when most of his plays have to be understood via Cliff notes or Indian bazaar notes? But since ELT is basically about teaching (and learning English), the burden falls on ELT practitioners to come up with some research (not following American or British models, but those set by our own researchers based on ground realities here) to find out where the problems lie, and once these have been identified, to design a new curriculum effectively addressing them. In my opinion, we need to concentrate on writing – composition – reading and speaking. Reading books from beginning to end – not scanning and skimming should be taught patiently and over time. I believe scanning and skimming are meant for societies having an advanced reading culture, but not certainly for one like ours which is increasingly shying away from reading. And, above all, something should be done to avoid encouraging rote learning. Also, contact with students' own mother language – overwhelmingly Bangla here but also others that exist – should be encouraged. One good thing that has happened in English Studies over the last few years has been a re-evaluation of local languages in terms of their ability to develop linguistic and cultural instincts of the users which they can transfer to a secong language situation and learn that language more effectively. I hope that English departments here take up the challenge. Some years ago, I read Mary Louise Pratt's "Linguistic Utopias," where she describes the attempt by Black English Vernacular to create "a speech community along…utopian lines," and by "some early feminist work in linguistics" seeking to "lay out an entity called 'women's language.'" And, after describing the work of critical linguists such as Roger Fowler as "extraordinarily empowering," Pratt writes that such work "indeed does challenge the normative force of standard grammar, insisting on heterogeneity, on

the existence and legitimacy of lifeways other than those of dominant groups" (56). I believe such work can be done here too, and in keeping with local sensibilities and realities. ELT has a huge potential, but to fully develop that the English departments here have to reorganize priorities and develop an application based-methodology.

The same also applies to English literature studies. When theory was introduced in the curriculum, it did help in the interpretation of literary texts, and expanded the boundaries of literature across cultures. But now that the days of high theory are over, more application-based theoretical approaches should be developed. Students have easily related to postcolonialism, feminism and postmodernism because there is an empirical ground that the students can locate from their own experience. Similarly, the need to include media studies and some emerging areas such as visual culture and communication may be adjusted without sacrificing too much of the canon. I for one do not want to see classics giving way to video texts, no matter what the imperatives of visual culture are. Video texts, if and when they become part of English Studies syllabus, may exist side by side with classics. There is no harm in that. And finally, literature courses should reintroduce the accent on composition that characterized the syllabus in the early years of the English department of Dhaka University.

6. As English Studies adjusts to the needs of the changing times, there may be criticism of its openness to everything. As Peter Widdowson once ruefully remarked, "Clearly the proper study of literature is – everything else" (Coyle *et al, 1228*), too much openness would rid the discipline of its focus – its proper study. It is important to realize that the structure of English has always been open, and as Derrida maintains, "always already in process" (quoted by Pope 26). There will be border crossings – and border disputes (e.g. should visual culture be considered an English studies subject?), but in the end, changes and adjustments have to be made without fundamentally disturbing the discipline's central focus if it has to be a prominent discourse of our time, exploring and giving voice to a whole range of human experience.

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