

ne, the head and the chief of anit
t without immediate exercise of a
h education alone can make to take
'instinct—presence of mind. Wild
ertain death; rest, and yielding
ntil only the two avenues of life are

free, are the next step; and to adv
he must either paddle like a dog, o
series of movements with legs and
respiratory organs which, it is tru
could execute, but which man hi
learn.

JOHN A. STAUNTON

DERANGING ENGLISH/ EDUCATION



FIG.14.—Merman. (From a specimen in Agassiz's Museum.)

A PASSING WISH

life of a Gipsy
-a red barefoot girl;
e and feet waiting-mai
y hair in curl;
e scene of the violet,
red rose, and the pine;
ht to spread my grassy bed—
ldn't it be divine?

To give me a posy of pretty flower
and give me wool so white,
and tramps covers to sing them
At four window-panes at night

O for the life of a Gipsy!
To hunt the hare for play;
And to take my trap on my shoul
And hie away and away—
way to the tents by the water,
When the stars began to shine—
o my glad wild crew, with heart
Ah! wouldn't it be divine?

for the life of a Gipsy!
To be up at the dawning gray;
nd to have my dog, like my sha
Beside me all the day;
o have a hat of plaited straw,
And a cloak of scarlet dye,
nd shoot like a light through the gl
nd make the owlets cry!

O for the life of a Gipsy!
To roam the wide world through
To have the wind for a waiting-m
And the sun for a sweet-heart
To say to my restless conscience,
Be still; you are no more mine
And to hold my heart beneath m
Ah! wouldn't it be divine?

TEACHER INQUIRY, LITERARY
STUDIES, AND HYBRID VISIONS
OF "ENGLISH" FOR
21ST CENTURY SCHOOLS

ch little chubby-cheek
hose, and call her mine,
er to tramp from camp to camp—
ldn't it be divine?

ife of a Gipsy!
the lazy shades;
dict sweet fairings
e village maids;



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Deranging English/Education

*People wish to be settled; only as far as they are unsettled
is there any hope for them.*

RALPH WALDO EMERSON, "Circles" (1841)

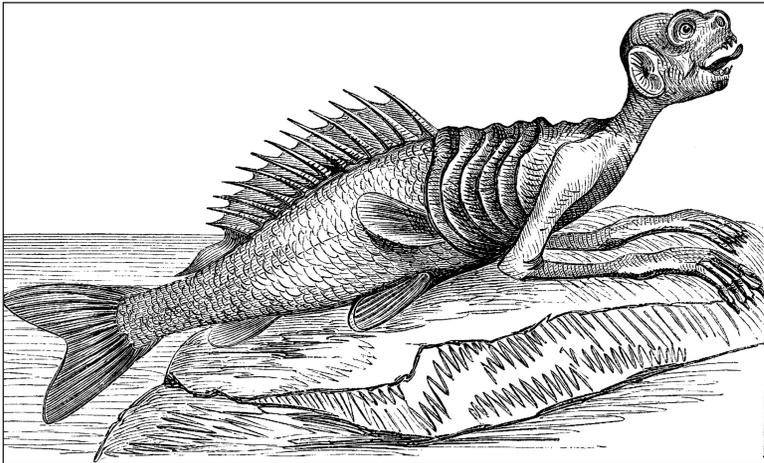


FIGURE 1.1. *Merman (From a specimen in Agassiz's Museum)*, Harper's New Monthly Magazine (1869)

The Hybrid Creature of the English Educator

This is the place.
And I am here, the mermaid whose dark hair
streams black, the merman in his armored body
We circle silently
about the wreck
we dive into the hold.
I am she: I am he

ADRIENNE RICH, "DIVING INTO THE WRECK" (1973)

For some time now I have been deranged: personally, professionally, and pedagogically. Despite the pervasiveness of the condition in my life as a teacher and scholar, it has proved to be a rather benign affliction; unsettling, certainly, but not altogether unwelcome. The image above (Figure 1.1) captures for me something of the unwieldy hybridity of English/Education and the unusual spaces English educators like myself inhabit in yoking together the diverging discourses of literary studies and teacher education. This book is an exploration into what can happen at the site of contact between those discourses, that is, at the cleaving of English and education—represented throughout the text as *English/Education*—to transform our teaching lives.

I am drawn to the term *deranging* and this notion of hybridity in light of the constantly evolving state of English as discipline and practice in the twenty-first century. The capacity to signal both physical and psychological movement and displacement, especially out of zones of comfort, joins nicely with the new knowledges called for by the current educational climate; this is an age of global Englishes, expanding canons, high-stakes assessment, and ubiquitous talk of “teacher accountability.” But the word *derangement* also evokes the ways in which the notion of remapping the *terrain* of English and education—not to mention simply living the life of a preservice English teacher or professor of English education—can itself be frustrating and disorienting. In one sense, the chapters here are reports from the field, moments of practice, inquiry, and discovery on the contested borders of English/Education. They follow two roughly contemporaneous trajectories: one tracing the life cycle of the profession from English teacher candidate to teacher educator; the other marked by the more recursive path of my own transition from a professor of American literature to an English teacher educator. That second path influences the form of the present chapter and those that follow by highlighting the deranged aspects of acquiring and living a hybrid life in the current educational climate. And so, a caution: readers accustomed to more traditional linear narratives of teacher-research may find themselves a bit deranged or unsettled by this discursive approach. I’ve tried to offer periodic reminders and signposts along the way to help reorient you. But I am also trying quite deliberately to

disrupt some prevailing ways of thinking about what should happen on and around the borders of English/Education. My hope is that the process of derangement I am both describing and employing might offer new ways of seeing what happens when we dive together into the hold of English/Education.

The strangely compelling figure above, embodying the derangement of the field, is at once a beacon to and admonition against what we might become as English educators. The caption to this image indicates that it is a “Merman (*From a specimen in Agassiz’s Museum*).” Etymologically it carries a balance of its being (*man*) and its environment or field of action (*mer*, sea). Of course it looks like a fusion of two creatures—half man, half fish. Drawing upon our memory of other texts, we might surmise that like its close and far more familiar relation the mermaid, the merman seems to be of that species of creature whose songs and stories enticed unwitting sailors to their doom. But this *particular* merman signifies more than just a dangerously seductive hybridity, for as a “specimen in Agassiz’s museum”—as opposed to, say, P. T. Barnum’s contemporary American Museum—it is also potentially an artifact of scientific knowledge and understanding. Louis Agassiz was one of the most important scientific figures of his day, and he was a particularly influential mediator, as both a teacher and a public intellectual, of scientific discoveries for the larger public. His inquiry-based approach to teaching and learning remains a powerful model for innovative and learner-centered practice. And following Agassiz’s famous injunction to his student studying the physiology of a fish, we must “look, look, look” (qtd. in Tierney 12) again at the merman if we are to discover what it means. In highlighting some of its other literary, cultural, and textual dimensions of meaning-making, I want to invite consideration of the merman as a sign of what can happen when the domains of literary studies and literacy education come together as English/Education. In this chapter I will be working specifically with examples from my own area of literary studies—the nineteenth-century literary mode of American regionalism, which offers a counter narrative to the canonical history of American literature. In this parallel account, regionalism is especially useful for thinking about English education today.

I came to the merman somewhat accidentally while doing archival research on the nineteenth-century writer Alice Cary, who developed her regionalist aesthetic in a range of popular and literary journals to which she was a prolific contributor from the late 1840s until her death in 1871. This long and embedded history within the instructional and discursive apparatus of literary and literacy production of her time makes Cary's work, and regionalist literature more generally, an ideal site to begin a refiguration of the place of American literature in the teaching of English and of English teachers. In its history and in its thematic focus, regionalism allows us to see differently, but also to see *with difference* those who might otherwise be ignored, overlooked, or viewed as exotic anomalies from a more dominant, nationalist perspective. It is not so much a literature *about* place as it is immersed in questions *of* place and placement, providing a useful critical model to think through the twenty-first-century challenges to teaching English in America.

The picture of the merman appears at the end of an article in a series by Cornell physiologist and biologist Burt Wilder in the December 1869 issue of *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*. Immediately below it sits one of Alice Cary's later poems, "A Passing Wish" (31) in which the poet momentarily envisions herself as a "Gipsy girl," free to range across the boundaries and borders of class, gender, and sexuality (see Appendix 1.1). Telling her "restless conscience, / Be still; you are no more mine" (53–55), Cary imagines exchanging her life of responsibility and artistic confinement "for the life of a Gipsy! / A strong-armed, barefoot girl; . . . So gloriously free" (1–2, 10). Cary's appropriation of the exotic to explore alternative subjectivities is certainly problematic, especially in light of her own regionalist aesthetic discussed below. But the poem also reinforces the merman's visual rhetoric, suggesting a similar liberating, evolutionary movement out of a placid past into a new way of being in the world, not without its difficulties—as we see the merman apparently gasping for breath in the unfamiliar air—but perhaps just as "gloriously free." Yet the proximity of the image troubles the poem's transformative musings, turning exotic subjectivity into monstrous spectacle. The readerly effect of this juxtaposition then unsettles—deranges—the possibility of a separate reading of either, calling

instead for an intra- and intertextual encounter that must eventually move beyond the page and out into the experiences of readers.

What begins as a curious coincidence of pairings acquires a heightened significance through the accretion of images and themes. During the run of Wilder's series in consecutive *Harper's* issues from November 1869 through February 1870, for instance, we see a story and several poems by Cary; but in the editor's literary and scientific records in these issues, we also see commentary on the latest "Philosophy of Teaching" (December 1869, 143), scientific discoveries about optics and vision ("New Revelations of the Spectroscope" [December 1869, 144–45]), curiosities of evolution in "Man and the Monkey" (December 1869, 148–50), and even a brief review of an autobiography by "the Prince of Humbugs," P. T. Barnum (January 1870, 296–97), himself a friend of Alice and Phoebe Cary. Rather comically, the story immediately following both the merman and Cary's poem is "The Fisherman's Daughter" by Mary N. Prescott (December 1869, 32–37). Indeed, the cumulative effect of such a deranged encounter importantly reveals *Harper's* and other post-Civil War magazines turning repeatedly to images of hybridity or the exotic to address questions of national, regional, and racial identity. In a striking parallel to our own cultural moment, we witness through this deranged perspective an acute preoccupation with the problem of educating a growing and increasingly more diverse population to become productive American citizens in an age of scientific and technological transformation.

Just before Wilder's conclusion to this part of his series, he moves from a discussion of buoyancy and the capacity for swimming among mammals to a digression about "those fabled creatures the Mermen and the Mermaids, which figure largely in the Northern legends" (December 1869, 30). He turns finally to the aquatic abilities of humans, "Man alone, the head and the chief of animals, is lost without immediate exercise of a quality which education alone can make to take the place of instinct—presence of mind" (31). Wilder, of course, deploys the image and the digression to reinforce the authority of science and the scientific habits of mind that allow us to see through such entertaining hoaxes as the merman. Yet the merman figure itself seems to resist Wilder's taxonomic gesture. As I look again and again at

the image perched incongruously above Cary's wistful poem of escape, I am brought to a surprising thought: how like the life of an English teacher (or even better, an English teacher *educator*), whose siren call summons students to sweet doom. See if this sounds familiar: Here we sit, comfortably ensconced in our universities, waiting for naïve young English majors whom we can ship off to graduate programs in literary studies; or perhaps we wait for preservice teachers to seduce to our progressive pedagogies, only to set them up for rough sailing when they have to go out in search of the "real world." Out There, they will land in places where they have to "teach the test," plod through curricular units on "the short story" or "the poem," and plow through worksheets, thesis statements, and five-paragraph essays, all while preparing their own students (in the language of many state departments of education) to chart their own "pathways to success"—but not before passing a battery of tests, and of course leaving no child behind.

Perhaps I have overstated the case a bit. And eventually, I want to resist that first reading of the figure. As dexterous as it may be, it doesn't really engage the materiality of the figure as "scientific artifact" or "textual event." But for now I offer it as a very powerful image of what the double vision of English/Education can be for teachers and students. One perspective captures the view from outside the academy, which often restricts or collapses the capacity of English/Education, ossifying it through "scientifically based" federal mandates into a discrete set of literacy skills and practices. The other, coming from within the practice of English/Education, itself unsettles efforts to establish a fixed way of becoming English educators, and imagines an identity seen as if from the inside of its changing context—a transformation of vision that has important implications for the practice of literacy and teaching.

Imagining English/Education

Perhaps more than any other group of student, not excluding PhDs, preservice English teachers are a continuing responsibility, to the university, to their teachers, and to themselves. No other

group has a greater impact on the hardest question of all: How will the knowledge, abilities, and canons of judgment that make what we call English exist and do their work in the culture and politics of our country? (Flannery et al. 61)

In 1999 the Teacher Education Project (commissioned in 1993) of the Modern Language Association (MLA) issued an extensive self-study of model programs that acknowledged the importance of integrating teacher preparation into departments of language and literary studies. *Preparing a Nation's Teachers: Models for English and Foreign Language Programs* argues for language and literature faculty to “take a self-conscious role in the education of students who will teach our subjects in secondary schools” (Gray 1). In the quote above, one of the model English education programs goes even further, putting the future of the field in the hands of preservice English teachers. In relocating power over the field to the classroom, it repositions the discourse about English to the very act of teaching the discipline. Despite the importance of these graduates on the practice of the curriculum, on the changing discourse of twenty-first-century literacy, and on public understanding of our field, “teaching” is typically characterized by English faculty as the *least* desirable and prestigious career option for our majors. Our tacit instruction to and rhetoric about future English teachers reinforces the institutional and epistemological divisions between English and education. And yet as James Marshall claims elsewhere in the MLA report, “all teaching is about teaching” and “every class that enrolls teachers is a class in teacher preparation” (380–81). Such a proposition means that we in English studies are already deeply implicated in English/Education. Not to recognize our influence on future English teachers doesn't just trouble the project of teacher preparation, it jeopardizes the very future of English studies, leaving all English teachers adrift in an ever-changing educational environment.

In his 1897 essay “My Pedagogic Creed,” John Dewey makes the provocative claim that “the image is the great instrument of instruction” (436), and what learners get out of any subject presented to them is simply the configuration of images that they themselves form with regard to it. In its *Guidelines for the Preparation of Teachers of English Language Arts* (1996), the Conference

on English Education (CEE) of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) echoes the observations of Dewey and the MLA report, putting image- or meaning-making practice at the fore of English teacher education. CEE has been a crucial advocate for innovative and substantive preparation of English teachers, and its guidelines significantly advise teacher education programs to provide opportunities for English teacher candidates to construct their own unique working versions of what English/language arts teachers in the real world might be, to become “makers of their own teacher selves” (42). Since 1996 a host of articles by researchers and classroom teachers in *English Education*, *Research in the Teaching of English*, and *English Journal* have examined the process of developing teacher identities among preservice and inservice teachers. At the center of this identity formation, according to this literature and echoed year-in and year-out by CEE position statements and in reports from MLA model teacher education programs, is the construction of viable collaborative networks between all those involved in teacher preparation. But as Peg Graham et al. remind us, the reach of the field ranges beyond our individual domains (126), and the figure of the future “English educator” becomes a sort of wayfarer moving constantly among community schoolrooms, colleges of education, and colleges of arts and sciences.

CEE updated its guidelines further with its July 2006 call for “Reconstructing English Education for the 21st Century.” This new document highlights even more explicitly the necessity of *teacher-research* for the future of English, noting that “the field of English Education is built upon knowledge gained from systematic and multimodal inquiry into the teaching and learning of English” (“What Is English Education?”). But despite the promise of this scholarship to shape the training and practice of classroom teachers through teacher education programs, and despite the earnest rhetoric of both the MLA Teacher Education Project and the many NCTE and CEE initiatives aimed at bridging differences, the divisions between faculty of English departments and colleges of education remain wide. We can’t seem to fashion a viable image of English/Education at work. The current “trouble with English,” as Alan Luke notes in his article of the same name, lies in recognizing that

the challenge facing teacher education, the curriculum, and school reform is *not* to find, standardize, and implement the one true method, but for teachers to develop flexible repertoires of field-, discourse-, and text-specific pedagogies, suited to particular textual artifacts, technologies, social and linguistic/interactional outcomes, and adaptable for students of different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. (90)

My attempt to bring the double vision of English/Education into some sort of harmony involves just such a process of configuration. Part of the account begins with a way of seeing my experience, and that of other English and education faculty, as illustrative of the challenges in teaching and learning English. I have been a faculty member in colleges and departments of education and departments of English; at home in each, I have also seen each made strange by the assumptions of the other. I have collaborated as both teacher and researcher in the classrooms of middle and secondary school teachers, and I've joined my own teacher candidates and English majors in pursuing teacher- and classroom research. These experiences have offered me a perspective that imagines how the image of the merman, or the "Gypsy girl" and other characters from American regionalist texts, might operate theoretically and pedagogically to overcome the divisions of English/Education and to prepare future English teachers.

Teacher-Research, or Looking at English/Education from Within

(1) Pedagogy is a knowledge-making activity that involves the interplay of visions and practices; (2) pedagogy is dependent on learners and is remade with each encounter, as the students and teachers change; (3) pedagogy cannot be finished; we cannot "finally" learn to teach. (Stenberg xviii)

In many ways, for me these questions come out of the same impulse that Dewey recognized about learning over a century ago and that New Literacy Studies and theorists of multiliteracies such as Luke have articulated more recently. And they require

the interplay of visions that Stenberg cites above. As a teacher educator, writing teacher, and specialist in American literature at a large state university with a site of the National Writing Project, I regularly find myself positioned at the intersection of multiple disciplines and discourses that come together to prepare future English teachers. Literary studies, critical pedagogy, literacy and learning theory—not to mention state and national performance and learning standards—each has its own (and sometimes competing) design on the field of English/Education. But fashioning an integrated and interdisciplinary union of these fields can, I believe, be powerfully transformative, enabling teacher candidates and teacher educators to become critically reflective practitioners; that is, teachers who make their own teaching of literature and writing an object of sustained inquiry and research. Weaving these threads together is akin to the pedagogy of multiliteracies, in which the “process of shaping emergent meaning involves representation and recontextualization” and in which “meaning makers remake themselves,” reconstructing and renegotiating their identities through a transformation of “Available Designs” (Cope and Kalantzis 22–23).

The web of meaning that results, however, is not a union without considerable costs and risks to one’s own security, comfort, and stability. One need only recall the fate of another mythological figure, the spinner Arachne, to know that re-presenting and recontextualizing “official” or “authorized” stories can be dangerous. Appropriately, Arachne herself (or spiders and other weavers) recurs throughout the work of nineteenth-century women regionalist writers, figuring their work as a tireless, necessary, and of course potentially futile challenge to the dominant cultural narrative. Rose Terry Cooke’s poem “Arachne” (appearing above a chapter of Henry James’s *Portrait of a Lady* in the *Atlantic Monthly*, March 1881) is a typical example, in which the poet parallels the spider’s spinning of “Her home, her bed, her nets for food, / All from that inward store” (5–6) to her own creative work, though she knows that “heartless hands / [may likely] Sweep all that hard-earned web away” (25–26). As Nancy Miller has argued, “arachnologies” such as Cooke’s are crucial sites for exploring discursive fields, and emerge from a sort of

hybrid interpretive act, simultaneously “a poetics of the *underread* and a practice of ‘overreading’” (83). This critical perspective is certainly pedagogical in Stenberg’s sense of the “interplay of visions and practices.” For the sake of deranging the curriculum of English/Education—especially in light of regionalism’s re-visioning of the literary canon and the value of local knowledges about teaching and learning—it is an apt metaphor. The methodology regionalism adopts to interrogate the assumptions of the dominant, national culture is very much like the *emic* approach taken by qualitative researchers and teacher-researchers. Rather than coming from the outside to look *in* or *at* students and student work, teacher-researchers speak from the perspective of participants critical of their own practice, participants whose inquiries emerge “from that inward store” to take a disciplined look *around* them to see what is going on.

In the spring of 2000, I was a visiting professor of American literature at a small liberal arts college in the Midwest, where a number of the English majors were also seeking certification as secondary English teachers. I had become increasingly puzzled and frustrated by the inability of students and faculty alike (myself included) to put literary studies and teacher education into what seemed like an authentic dialogue; yet I had no idea at the time what a more satisfying conversation might look like, or who would do most of the talking. A shift came, however, when I discovered the Indiana English Teachers Collaborative (ETC), a cohort of likeminded English teachers and faculty involved in a regional school-university partnership, which had been featured in the MLA Teacher Education Project report.

The teacher-research network of ETC has offered me an ongoing immersion in teacher-research that has become a model for what I encourage my own students to do in my pedagogy courses. They look at their classrooms from the inside, but they also cross borders of practice to investigate the classrooms of critical friends/co-inquirers. “Diving into the wreck” of each other’s classrooms and practices, they then use what they’ve learned through their reflection and observation to find ways to meet the needs of all literacy learners. Chapter 2, “A Collaboration of ‘Perfect Economy’: Carrying Teacher-Research Across

Country in Williams’s ‘The Red Wheelbarrow,’” provides an examination of the sustained inquiry among classroom teachers that has inspired this collaborative approach in my own research courses, and which establishes the inquiry frame of mind that allowed for the subsequent discoveries and investigations of the other chapters. Since this initial collaboration, I have spent hundreds of hours in secondary classrooms and with classroom teachers, thinking and talking about the teaching of writing and literature. Although our own pedagogy is arguably the most public and visible enactment of our research pursuits, as Judith Fetterley recently argued in “Teaching and ‘My Work,’” this is not work that often “counts” professionally for English faculty. Stenberg likewise cautions that pedagogy and teacher-research need to go beyond a facile sharing of methods to be seen as praxis-oriented endeavors within a theory-practice dialectic. Such work “is reflective of . . . [the] specific, embodied location and the contexts” teacher-researchers work within (52). For me, this embodied work brought both personal and professional transformations. I began a second doctoral program (in language education), became part of a long-term collaborative inquiry among teacher-researchers from six established national networks (see Fecho, Graham, and Hudson-Ross), and began to test in my own classrooms the possibilities of deranging the curriculum. When, as part of a collaborative network, I traveled to classrooms in western Massachusetts, Philadelphia, and Indianapolis to work with other teacher-researchers, I was moving along this dialectical axis. My first forays into teacher-research were not solitary pursuits, but were connected to other teachers interested in the intersection of student writing, the teaching of literature, and classroom ethos. Although I had been teaching for more than five years, teaching and classroom learning now became for me part of a new curriculum in an “apprenticeship of observation.” I began to see signs and designs for making meaning of teaching and learning, and I began to turn them to my own configurations. I have continued this process of *transmediation* in my current work with undergraduate majors, teacher candidates, and graduate students in English education, as I try to convince students of the value of inquiry to generate literate lives.

Sideshadowing English/Education Pedagogy

How is it that as a well-read English major, I have never heard of these authors? How did they “disappear” from the canon? And how have they managed to get “re-appeared”?

STUDENT IN AMERICAN WOMEN WRITERS CLASS (*September 2005*)

But this is only part of the story, only one way of seeing from the deranged perspective of the merman. For me, arriving safely on the shores of teacher education didn't mean abandoning the ship of English studies altogether. This story of coming to English/Education from literary studies—particularly exchanging a study of the ethics of American regionalism for an inquiry into *teaching* regionalist literature—is linked to another, related set of teaching moments and images mapping my trajectory from regionalism to teacher-research. In the context of Cary and regionalism, the merman has a very particular resonance, for regionalism disrupts traditional ways of seeing literature and history. It invites a shift in perspective about what it means to be American, to be a reader, and to be a writer, through a series of narrative and stylistic moves fostering a readerly refiguration of ethical dilemmas faced by the overlooked of society (who Fetterley and Pryse call the “out of place”). By showing us alternative visions of what it can mean to be located or placed as a certain kind of American or reader or writer, regionalism constructs what Gary Saul Morson would describe as a “sideshadowing” perspective, one that “projects—from the ‘side’—the shadow of an alternative present. It allows us to see what might have been and therefore changes our view of what is” (11). The work of teacher-researchers more generally adopts a similar perspective on the “region” of classroom teaching, moving from local accounts of practice out into the larger field. That process, according to Fecho, Graham, and Hudson-Ross, is both recursive and often unsettling, for it frequently challenges the very enterprise of English education in the schools. And it forces teacher-researchers to come to terms with “the wobble” of classroom inquiry, a vertiginous state “of uncertainty that lies between and among figured worlds” (175). The classroom inquiries of Chapters 3, 4, and 5 attempt to describe the promise of finding our pedagogy along that uncertain line

between the figured instructional worlds of English and education. The derangement of classroom practice through such inquiry offers a sideshadowing pedagogical perspective on the questions always at stake for teachers of English at secondary and post-secondary levels: What is English for? Who is it for? And, given our responses to these questions, how should we proceed with our own research, writing, and teaching?

The continuing need for that shift was made glaringly present for me in the student query heading this section. At the time, the questions raised by my student, from a split graduate/upper-level undergraduate course in American women writers, sparked a lively discussion about the nature of literary history, the politics of aesthetic criticism and evaluation, and the institutional structure of the academy. But as we talked, this host of women writers seemed alternately to appear and disappear; they were not yet coherent images in our understanding of American literary history so much as they were entertainments in an academic game of now you see them, now you don't. As I listened to my students, I tried to construct an image of what they were really grappling with. Who or what is behind this "disappearing act"? What sort of—and whose—sleight of hand is at work here?

The pedagogical challenge of teaching in a way that will help students and future teachers recast their images of American history and literature is in part the methodological question behind Dewey's claim about the image as the instrument of instruction: What is the image or set of images I want or need to use to elicit such a reconfiguration? This question was part of the design for the American literature courses described in Chapter 4. There again, the sideshadowing perspective of regionalism and historical transmediation, making visible the overlooked and outcast, offers pedagogical models. When students encounter a series of competing or complementary images, the "disappearing" of authors is understood not only as a historical process, but also as something that is not inevitable. Students thus may begin to refigure a complex past. But for the instructor and student engaged in academic discourse about issues of teaching the canon and re-visioning the literary and cultural history of America, the question remains: How can students re-vision their understanding in ways that will not simply mirror back to those in power their

own cherished assumptions (however high-minded)? Students must find ways to construct a coherent image that is held together by their own experiences, inquiries, and meaning-making systems.

Cary's Sideshadowing Perspective on the *Ladies' Repository*

I believe that for these sketches I may challenge of competent witnesses at least this testimony, that the circumstances have a natural and probable air which should induce their reception as honest relations unless there is conclusive evidence against them. Having this merit, they may perhaps interest if they do not instruct readers who have regarded the farming class as essentially different and inferior, and entitled only to that peculiar praise they are accustomed to receive in the resolutions of political conventions.

Alice Cary, *Preface to Clovernook* (1852, vii)

In the first issue of *The Ladies' Repository, and Gatherings of the West*, an engraving appeared, titled "View on the Ohio" (Figure 1.2), which offers a visual demonstration of the way regionalism can help us consider how to proceed amid the placement and displacement of "English" in America. The journal was a mid-twentieth-century Ohio magazine, which by the 1850s would become virtually synonymous with the name Alice Cary (much to the chagrin of its editors). The pastoral perspective of this frontispiece, the editor's commentary on it, and the two essays that follow it, "Reading" and "Female Education," frame the aesthetic, ethical, and educational horizons of the magazine. This first issue of January 1841 no doubt helped to shape the moral and artistic imagination of twenty-one-year-old Alice Cary, as she set out to develop her own vision of life in the Midwest.

The engraving provides a view from the Kentucky side of the river three miles below Cincinnati. In the editor's estimation, the piece "is thought to be correct, presenting in just and striking shades the principle graces of this charming scene" and "the peculiar features of our Ohio scenery" ("View" 1). The aesthetic vision the editor applauds is one of selective verisimilitude, which

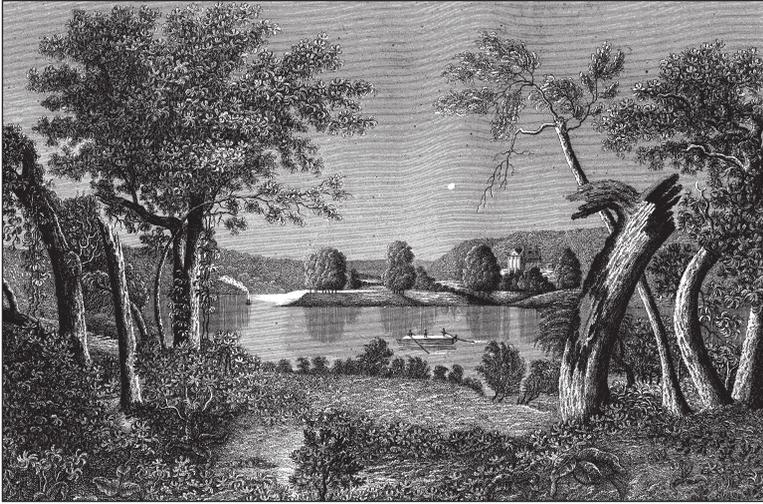


FIGURE 1.2. "View on the Ohio," *Ladies' Repository* (1841)

speaks to a familiar—and familial—audience, but only of a certain authorized kind. This idyllic view is one that keeps the regional and local subject a distant spot on the horizon, and reinscribes privileged sites of white male viewing. The engraving captures the estate of Thomas Yeatman, a major figure in the social and political life of Cincinnati—not Cary's "farming class." But what we do not see here, for instance, are those whose labor has allowed the Yeatman estate to command this view. Cary's work in later volumes of the same magazine refuses to allow the inclusion of "correct" local and familiar details to portray regional subjects as objects of ridicule or oversight. Instead, through a recurring narrator who knows her subjects as friend, neighbor, and often family member, Cary fashions both story and teller as an "honest relation," whose insider's perspective can expose those community structures that establish and threaten regional identity—particularly the familial and social bonds that alternately stifle and enable individuals to live "out of place."

Using one of Cary's stories from this journal, I want to offer a more explicit reading of how English/Education can move from literary studies to questions of practice. The story anticipates Cary's ethical reminder of the "orphaned" status of us all, and

shows how social institutions such as the school are implicated in the ethical project of the region. The reading I am suggesting attempts to draw out the pedagogy of that project and to consider the implications for today's educational institutions, especially university English/Education programs. Published in the March 1851 issue of *Ladies' Repository*, "Peter Harris" is the tale of a boy deliberately orphaned by his parents. The sketch relates the boy's abandonment by his father, his forced relocation to his relations' home, and his subsequent (and rather rapid) death there. The plot, in fact, is little more than this brief outline of what happens to a child quite literally left behind.

What gives the story its force is the focus on character and the restrained voice of Cary's narrator, which underscore the utter hopelessness of a boy whose only crime is to have had the effrontery, after he has been abandoned by his father, to confess that he would like a great many things in life. The boy's relations laugh at this desire and quickly put it in check. For example, the aunt, "a pious woman" (as the narrator remarks in an aside), immediately questions Peter on his arrival in a manner that already includes her expected answers, eliminating any volition and agency from his responses. "You would like to be grateful," she says, and then elaborates the meaning of this word for the boy: "You must feel as if the consecration of all your energies to your uncle and me could never repay us." In the aunt, Cary presents a version of the morally self-satisfied reader of the magazine. Ruled by the desire to maintain propriety rather than foster charity, such a "religious" woman, the narrator reveals, must *know* that she will be obeyed. So she quickly continues her interrogation about Peter's gratitude: "You will feel so, will you not?" (103). Harboring more directive than inquiry or dialogue, the question is designed to ensure the knowledge and power only of the one who asks it.

Cary's narrator here encourages us to identify not with the monologic voice of propriety, but with the perspective of the overlooked. It is a critical narrative pedagogy. Accordingly, the narrator informs us that "Peter was quite at a loss. He knew no more than he knew what grateful was, what his energies were, or how to consecrate them to his uncle and her; but he said he would

try.” The indirect discourse forces us to give voice internally to Peter, thereby making his condition in some sense ours. Not surprisingly, then, Peter’s answer seems humble and reasonable, especially for one newly deserted by his own father in a strange town. But the aunt’s rejoinder comes with all the conviction and violence of the absolutist: “There must be no *try* about it. You must do it, or be whipped everyday, till you do” (103). Given this reception from the community, Peter’s rapid decline and death as a result of the neglect of his family and his teachers is hardly surprising.

What *is* surprising in the story is the extent to which Cary delineates the patterns of abuse that terrorize the young boy. A scene in school is especially troubling, and the passage is worth quoting at length:

The master, a tall, dark-faced man, called him [Peter] to his desk, and asked him the following questions:

“You come to this school to be taught the rudiments of an English education, I suppose?”

Peter knew he came to be taught something, and tremblingly answered, “Yes, sir.”

““Yes, sir, if you please,” said the teacher; and Peter said, “Yes, sir, if you please.”

“Where do you live?”

“At Uncle Jason’s, if you please.”

“Why, boy, you must be a numskull. You must say ‘if you please,’ if it’s appropriate. What is your name?”

“Peter Harris, if you please, if it’s appropriate.”

“The boy is a blockhead!” said the master; and boys and girls, putting their books before their faces, joined in a general titter.

“Come, come! That will do!” said the master, looking over the school, and frowning with great severity. Then taking a limber switch from his desk, and shaking it over the head of Peter, in a menacing manner, he told him, that all the scholars got whipped who did not mind and study their lessons. He then told him to go to his seat, and study his book.

This seat was a high, wooden bench, without any back; and Peter found sitting there, for four hours at once, very tiresome, especially as he did not know *a* from *b*, and, consequently, could not study. After a while, he was called to say his lesson, but not

knowing [a single] one of the letters, was made to stand on a high stool for ten minutes, and all the children were required to point their fingers at him, the master laying his watch on the desk, to see the time. At its expiration, he was sent back to his seat, and told to see if he could study *now*; but he could not study any better than before; and when the boys went out to play, he was “kept in.” (104)

By her casual recounting of its apparent ordinariness and of the systematic way in which the children themselves become complicit—first with their tittering, then with their pointing—in the ostracism of Peter, Cary makes the abuse here and at the home of his aunt and uncle present and frighteningly real. She also demonstrates how that abuse is inscribed institutionally and pedagogically. Beginning with Peter’s father, who, as he gives up on Peter to seek his fortunes farther west, informs the boy that he will amount to nothing, Peter’s life is filled with those who delight in administering verbal and physical torture.

To indicate that this abuse comes from the very systems that *Ladies’ Repository* says should care for children—the extended family and the school (Peter does not live long enough to see the church)—is a particularly daring narrative move for Cary to make in a magazine claiming to uphold those institutions. Cary’s story challenges the presumption of the magazine to be, in its words, an organ for imparting piety and developing ethical wisdom solely because of its institutional affiliation or its stated intent to provide its readers only moral bits. Such moral theorizing is dangerously circumscribed and not without its own rendering within the pages of the magazine itself. The fate of Peter Harris—at the hands of just such readers of moral magazines as the aunt and the schoolmaster—presents a clear challenge to the very journal that publishes the story. The story suggests that if this magazine is truly to be a pedagogical tool for social justice, it must be prepared to direct its critical gaze inward, to see whether its literary renderings of the good, moral, and just life have managed to become written on the hearts and can be read in the actions of both its editors and readers.

Troubling English/Education

Often my brightest students are told by certain members of the English Department that they are too bright to become teachers. (Foster 261)

The thematized framing of ethics, social justice, and regionalist difference in these texts certainly envisions new ways of viewing American literary and cultural history. But I would argue that it also suggests ways to investigate how difference and the ethics of teaching are worked out in real classrooms, where we attempt to teach “the rudiments of an English education.” It is this link that enables literary studies, and regionalism in particular, to inform the work of teacher education in ways requiring us to see past our own areas of comfort and specialty. Recognizing such a connection has been the crucial component in my beginning to de-range the curriculum of English education, a claim that I found myself presenting at a job talk to a roomful of English department colleagues in the spring of 2003. What happened when I read the above passage from “Peter Harris” surprised me: as literate and literary “English” people, we shared a moment of laughter at Peter’s expense. There was something simultaneously so ridiculous and so painfully true and current about the scenario that it brought the presentation momentarily to a pause. Yet here was something that could not be laughed away, or passed along to our colleagues in education, or disappeared into the pious rhetoric of federal mandates. We had somehow become complicit in the very thing that we thought we could avoid having to consider—the practice of the English teacher in the face of students in need (fictional or real). It was, as we say, a teachable moment, one that became an occasion to talk further, during the interview and subsequently as a new colleague, about what it is we do when we are teaching English.

But there is something about that moment of laughter at the expense of Peter Harris that still lurks in the shadows of my practice and acts as a grim reminder of how easy it is for an encounter with literature to turn into a platitude about the value of looking at one’s own practice and of learning to respect the needs of all students. It reveals an uneasy tension at the juncture of

English and education masked by a simple celebration of hybridity. Just as Cary's critique of *Ladies' Repository* relies upon the status she has acquired through that magazine's own project of literacy and reform, my own critique of English and education rested upon my ability to establish a certain esprit de corps with my future colleagues. On the one hand, the moment of laughter I shared with them was a moment to show that I was someone who could translate between the two worlds of English and education; it was a well-designed gambit to *perform* the "teaching moment" of catching us all out in order to reorient our sympathies to the needs of all learners, enabling us each to give lip service to the ideals of teaching that every department mission statement claims as its own. On the other hand, it was a chance to show that really I was still one of them, someone who might make an interesting and entertaining reading of literature, but who would protect English from the "blockheads" that the college of education might send our way.

The second interpretation leaves us with a grotesque image of a roomful of English teachers laughing at a Peter Harris-like student who just has no clue. And it's all the more unsettling for me to acknowledge that it was also a genuine moment, despite the motives I've ascribed to myself in constructing it as a textual event for my colleagues. But I think this is also the same impulse that makes us keenly aware of what is potentially *lost* when we bring English and education together. It's the feeling I get when I hear young men and women gush about the love for children that has made them want to *be* English teachers, yet they claim to hate reading and writing. I cringe because, frankly, that love is simply not enough. Unless they also have a genuine interest in pursuing the hard questions that literature poses—about the meaning of life, death, love, and even teaching and schooling—then really, I want to tell them, they ought to find another major and leave those kids alone. And a mere love for literature—particularly as experienced in traditional college-level classrooms—as Pamela Grossman observes in *The Making of a Teacher*, is itself poor preparation for the exigencies of secondary-school English teaching. But as Robert Yagelski and other English educators have argued recently, we likewise "need to abandon the idea that our primary task is to prepare English teachers for

contemporary classrooms” (Yagelski, “Stasis and Change” 268). English/Education, of course, is not just about the teaching of children or the teaching of literature. Instead of clinging stubbornly to a fetishized notion of the literary or of teaching, it may be time for us to acknowledge that both college and secondary English need to change radically at the curricular and pedagogical levels if either is to succeed or even survive.

As mediators of literacy and culture, English teachers are in the implicitly ethical position of “norming” for students the ways in which language and literacy matter in America. We can help students raise the same sorts of questions about what it means to be American that regionalism does; together we can examine what is at stake in privileging certain views of literacy and learning. But *any* curriculum of American literature questions what it means to be American (here, now, in the past, in the future), what it means to be literate, and how literature can both promote and constrain visions of literacy and identity. The image of the schoolmaster in “Peter Harris” casts one way of being a teacher, though certainly not one we would encourage our students to emulate. The teacher-researchers I’ve worked with have shown me another way of thinking about how best to acquire “pedagogical content knowledge,” as Grossman calls it—that is, knowledge about how best to teach *x* text to *y* group of students. But teacher-research networks like ETC also do more, seeking through sustained inquiry into each other’s practice to foster the sort of professional and praxis-oriented communities that Yagelski argues are necessary for English education “to prepare students to engage in the messy and uncertain process” of building just and sustainable communities (“Stasis and Change” 268). Critical inquiry into our own practice (not just as English educators, but as English faculty) through teacher-research *can* provide the corrective lens on that connection among texts, teaching, and action. But there is no guarantee that it will make things better for us, or for our students. And this is what I’m left with in that moment of laughter: an uneasy sense that, in the face of continuing pressure from those outside our fields to standardize curriculum and notions of literacy, English/Education is a potentially empty hybrid, an elaborate fantasy of bridging disciplines that ultimately changes nothing, producing neither effective teaching nor genuine inquiry

into literature or classrooms. At its worst, it's not even a device for containing and maintaining the status quo of either discipline; it becomes simply a way of shuttling students back and forth across campus until they graduate, never having had to think about why they want to be English teachers or English majors in the first place.

The Future Praxis of English/Education: Opportunities and Obstacles

Praxis is really a theory about theories, in fact, a way of explaining how theories are derived, made workable and necessarily alter. Engagement in *praxis*, then, is crucial for teachers as they attempt to nurture the literacies of their students in the English classroom, to experience, to understand experience, and to use understanding to change and improve experience. It requires both the time to speculate, explore, and theorize and the ability to apply reflection to action. (Roskelly 289)

In its July 2006 call for “Reconstructing English Education for the 21st Century,” CEE has identified several ways English educators and colleges of education can think differently about how they each construct the discipline and practice of “English.” Some of these alternatives we have known about for some time through the MLA Teacher Education Project. While the deranged perspective on English/Education I have been arguing for here, and that I extend throughout the following chapters, shares much with the proposals, I want to offer a brief wish list of specific practices that English departments themselves might adopt to take the lead in reshaping the field. These practices require us to think about how we want students’ encounters with “English” to matter in our classrooms and research (see Appendixes 1.2 and 1.3).

Teacher-research directs its critical lens on these encounters, and English departments in particular can certainly do more to foster a climate for faculty to pursue classroom inquiry. Reflective practice emerges from our ability to name the meaning-making moments in teaching and learning. In place of the often ceremonial and rote format of yearly colleague evaluations, I would like to see English faculty take a page from the practice of

national board certified teachers and even our own teacher candidates: audio- or videotape what happens in our classrooms; examine it as data; and describe and critique what teaching and learning look like. Even if this sort of investigation were to happen only once in every review cycle, it would transform the weight of teaching for us and for our students.

This sort of inquiry also makes acts of learning more available to our students. We can point to what and how they know and understand. Helping students become aware of their own learning and make connections between their textual encounters and lives outside our classes is another step we can take. As I describe in Chapter 5, my teacher candidates investigate their own literacy histories as well as their students' multiple literacies to acquire the materials for their own inquiries about teaching English. In my own literature courses, I ask students to find a historical or contemporary text, or to produce an original artifact in a separate sign system (a transmediation) that captures their understanding of a particular reading. I call these extensions (with apologies to Roland Barthes) *Image-Music-Text*. Each transmediation comes with a brief written rationale in which students make text-to-text, -self, and -world connections. The result has been a productive pairing of historical and contemporary, high and popular cultural texts, and trans- and interdisciplinary links (see Appendix 1.4).

The movements outside the field from *within* the field of English that students take in these transmediations and “literacy digs” point to the productive possibilities of getting outside our departments, physically and metaphorically. Far too many accounts of English/Education in the past cite the institutional and theoretical divisions between English and education faculty. Having lived and worked on both sides of that institutional divide, I know firsthand that our colleagues across campus and in the schools have perspectives on English/Education that we need to know about; and they need to know about our understanding of the field too. The best place to see these understandings in practice is in each other's classrooms.

Several obstacles lie in the path of these new trajectories, however, and departments and faculty both need to be aware of the tensions and challenges that are embedded in their current

practices. The first is workload. Until institutional rhetoric about teaching matches tenure policies and procedures, many of these shifts I am proposing will come at the cost of individual faculty. For instance, when I traveled to the classrooms of my teachers, I gained important insights about their work and the changing nature of English. But the hundred hours and thousand miles I put in during that semester were relegated to a single line under “service” on my annual review. The second obstacle comes with shifting power in the classroom. Perhaps the greatest challenge for students, and the most difficult work for teachers, is for us to help them reconceive the nature and function of schooling as something *they* create through their experiences. This requires trust in students and student willingness to assume responsibility for learning. Of course, statements that equate learning with a consumer transaction and a college education with the purchase of disposable goods (such as the Secretary of Education’s recent Commission on the Future of Higher Education report) do not help matters. The third tension is related to this educational discourse. The expectations we create for preservice English teachers and English majors need to be similarly high, but students, too, need to commit themselves to excellence in the field if we are to see real change in English/Education. Part of changing the discourse is to put teaching and learning at the center of inquiry in English.

Repulsions, Reversions, and the Return of English/ Education

Those fabled creatures the Mermen and the Mermaids, which figure largely in the Northern legends are very respectfully treated by Pontoppidan [in his 1755 *Natural History of Norway*], who reports that one merman “sang an unmusical song” in a strange tongue, but that another individual “swore in very good Danish.” They were generally represented as half fish and half man or woman, and never as hideous or even ugly. But the *real* mermaids, the “genuine humbugs,” if the expression is allowable, are *always* repulsive, even when, as in the case of the Japanese specimen featured [here] . . . the union of the fish’s tail with a wooden head and chest can scarcely be detected. (Wilder 30; emphasis added)

I want to end by returning to the intersection of the illustrated merman, scientific method, and the ethical and cultural work of education. I wish to bring these various images back together into a single, deranged, but cautiously hopeful vision. The history of this particular merman offers another reading of the figure and provides a caution against an uncritical interpretation of such depictions of hybridity. As I noted earlier, the illustration is labeled as being a representation of a specimen from Agassiz's Museum, the Museum of Comparative Zoology at Harvard. Purported to have been recovered by sailors in Japan, it is in fact a rather fanciful hoax: a fish's tail attached to a carved wooden head and chest. What then is it designed to do as an artifact of scientific knowledge and learning in the 1860s? Agassiz's own pedagogical skill in recasting seemingly complex biological theories was especially significant in terms of his position concerning the great evolution debates of the mid-nineteenth century as they applied to an understanding of human difference. In this context, as Louis Menand has noted in *The Metaphysical Club*, Agassiz was a polygenist, which means that he believed in the separate creation of the races. In fact, each race was seen as a different species altogether, which "had been endowed with different attributes and unequal aptitudes from the start" (104).

For Agassiz, the Museum of Comparative Zoology was a place to gather specimens that would, among other things, validate the view of polygenism, demonstrating that species of all kinds and across different continents were in fact unique to their places, and that whatever hybrid species existed were either clever hoaxes or else so repugnant as to be undesirable. The cultural and educational work the museum did, in other words, was to amass a canon of artifacts that would foster an either/or thinking about evolution and other beings, and ultimately to support the hypothesis of polygenism. It is, I suggest, the same sort of either/or thinking that occludes the ethical dimensions of pedagogical content knowledge, separating theory and practice in the lives of our preservice teachers, and alienating English and education faculty from each other. This kind of thinking erodes the work of regionalist and popular authors from American literary history; and under the guise of scientific, aesthetic, or literary objectivity,

it confines our approach to considering curriculum, literacy, and literary studies to a very narrow range of research, texts, and practices.

We see a disturbing example of this dichotomy at work, revealing the way false images and constructions can acquire the authority of scientific “truth,” in Agassiz’s counsel to Samuel Gridley Howe about policies for dealing with a large freed black population during the Civil War, as described below. It is a pre-scient example of ideology under the guise of scientific practice stacking the deck to legitimize one’s political and cultural position. It should invite us to look critically at the purging of qualitative studies of teaching and learning from research databases, and the de facto exclusion of such studies from federal grant programs in education. A prominent abolitionist and educational reformer, Howe was appointed by Abraham Lincoln to head the American Freedmen’s Inquiry Commission in 1863, the year the Emancipation Proclamation went into effect. It is striking to see Howe’s anxious concern for the future racial character of the country in his query to Agassiz. According to Menand, Dr. Howe

wrote to Agassiz to ask whether, in his opinion as a scientist, “the African race, represented by less than two million blacks, & a little more than two million mulattoes . . . will be a persistent race in this country; or, will it be absorbed, diluted, & finally effaced by the white race, numbering twenty four millions.” (114)

The four letters Agassiz posted back to Howe in a single week register his considerable alarm at the prospect of racial mixing; his increasing obsession with hybridity as deviance is notable, as he “believed that racial interbreeding would be a biological catastrophe, on grounds that hybrids were defective and sterile” (114). And he concluded with the stern monition to the government “to put every possible obstacle to the crossing of the races, and the increase of half-breeds” (qtd. in Menand 114). Agassiz abhorred slavery, but we see in his response a reversion to racialized scientific understanding in the face of troubling political and social restructuring. To acknowledge a common humanity with an African living in America—to recognize, in Cary’s phrase, that he might share an “orphaned” status—would demand

an ethical obligation to envision and act for a much different kind of social justice than that found in Agassiz's scientific truth.

In this light, the merman viewed as the siren of English/Education is, as I suggested earlier, ultimately a contrivance, a dangerous distraction that serves other ends—to keep us focused on false dichotomies instead of on the people and the work immediately before us. Yet it is not simply an image to be used to spark this truth and then be ignored. When we recognize the deliberate and clearly racialized distortions of the figure and the ends they are designed to serve, we come to see that perhaps the merman is calling out to a ship that *needs* to be wrecked. Since 1999 MLA has known that English and education faculties must work together in the preparation of teachers. Both MLA and NCTE have known, too, that the *ways of knowing* common to our disciplines do not follow prescribed or normative processes that can easily accede to federal mandates or standardized outcomes. And yet, nearly a decade later, the separation remains—education faculty and English faculty each having “learned content” (to borrow a phrase from another of Cary's stories) to navigate the same waters without a sense of where the other is going. Under the current educational and political climate, it is naïve for either faculty to imagine that things can or should stay as they are. Powerful forces outside the academy *and* the classroom have already decided what the rudiments of an English education should be. For the sake of our own classrooms, our students, and the continuing relevance of our work, it's time for English/Education to start talking back and to decide for itself what sort of creatures we will be.



A 19th-century merman, a 17th-century poet and nun, an aspiring magician with a box cutter poised over a classic of 20th-century poetry, and a group of inquiring teachers turned classroom researchers join together with an assortment of textual and classroom artifacts to offer a vision of what “English” can be for 21st-century schools. **DERANGING ENGLISH/EDUCATION** brings these and other hybrid figures to bear on the troubling institutional and theoretical divisions between the fields of English studies and English teacher education. In a series of case studies drawn from his own experiences as a professor of English education and American literature, John Staunton shows us what can happen when we “derange” traditional perspectives on research, teaching, and the curriculum. Throughout this journey, Staunton continually invites us to see the enterprise of English/Education from the range of subject positions with stakes in the future of English. Preservice teachers, classroom teachers, teacher-researchers, and teacher educators all get a chance to speak to what it means to live and work on that border between English and Education.

Compelling reading for anyone interested in English studies and its teaching. Staunton disrupts our current thinking of what we should be doing as English educators and helps us to see “with difference” how it might be otherwise. It’s one of the best books on teaching English I have read. —**LIL BRANNON**,
University of North Carolina at Charlotte

Staunton’s work offers the ideal balance of the theoretical and the practical. His notions of derangement and “found pedagogies” helped me think anew about what it means to prepare future English teachers, while his descriptions of the classroom practices he instituted and observed gave me a wealth of new teaching strategies to try out in my own classroom.

—**JAMES M. LANG**, *Assumption College*

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ISSN 1073-9637

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ISBN 978-0-8141-1083-6



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