

# REAL

Yearbook of  
Research in English and American  
Literature

---

Volume 38 (2023)

**Dialogues with Winfried Fluck**  
Essays and Responses on American Studies

Edited by  
Laura Bieger and Johannes Voelz

narr\|f  
ranck  
e\|atte  
mpto

Yearbook of Research in English and American Literature  
Volume 38



# REAL

Yearbook of  
Research in English and American Literature

General Editors  
Tobias Döring · Ansgar Nünning  
Donald E. Pease · Johannes Voelz

---

**38**

**Dialogues with Winfried Fluck**

**Essays and Responses on American Studies**

Edited by  
Laura Bieger and Johannes Voelz

narr\|f  
ranck  
e\|atte  
mpto

## Editors

*Tobias Döring*, LMU München, Department für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, Schellingstr. 3,  
D-80799 München, Germany

*Ansgar Nünning*, Universität Gießen, Institut für Anglistik, Otto-Behaghel-Straße 10,  
D-35394 Gießen, Germany

*Donald E. Pease*, English Department, Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH 03755, USA

*Johannes Voelz*, Goethe-Universität Frankfurt, Institut für England- & Amerikastudien,  
Norbert-Wollheim-Platz 1, D-60629 Frankfurt am Main

## Advisory Board

Jonathan Arac (University of Pittsburgh), Catherine Belsey † (University of Wales), Marshall Brown (University of Washington), Ronald Shusterman (Université Jean Monnet), Werner Sollors (Harvard University), Arne Zettersten (University of Copenhagen)

© 2024 · Narr Francke Attempto Verlag GmbH + Co. KG, D-72070 Tübingen

All rights including the rights of publication, distribution and sales, as well as the right to translation, are reserved. No part of this work covered by the copyrights hereon may be reproduced or copied in any form or by any means – graphic, electronic or mechanical including photocopying, recording, taping, or information and retrieval systems – without written permission of the publisher.

[www.narr.de](http://www.narr.de) · eMail: [info@narr.de](mailto:info@narr.de)

CPI books GmbH, Leck

ISBN 978-3-381-10871-8 (Print)

ISBN 978-3-381-10872-5 (ePDF)

ISBN 978-3-381-10873-2 (ePub)

ISSN 0723-0338

## Contents

Preface . . . . .	7
<i>Winfried Fluck</i> The Americanization of Literary Studies . . . . .	9
<i>Leonard Cassuto</i> The Continuing “Americanization of Literary Studies” . . . . .	25
<i>Winfried Fluck</i> Literature, Liberalism, and the Current Cultural Radicalism . . . . .	37
<i>Stephen Greenblatt</i> Response to Winfried Fluck, “Literature, Liberalism, and the Current Cultural Radicalism” . . . . .	67
<i>Winfried Fluck</i> Lionel Trilling, Jane Austen, and American Literature . . . . .	71
<i>Jonathan Arac</i> The long lineage of cultural politics: Lionel Trilling once more . . . . .	83
<i>Winfried Fluck</i> Systemic Containment or Imaginary Self-Extension? A Theory of American Literature . . . . .	95
<i>Susanne Rohr</i> From Seesaw to Standstill? The Transnational Imaginary in Katie Kitamura’s <i>Intimacies</i> . . . . .	113
<i>Winfried Fluck</i> Crossing the Threshold: Realism and the Expression of Emotions . . . . .	127
<i>Peter Schneck</i> A Feel for the Real: Realism, Observation and Emotional Identification – A Response to Winfried Fluck . . . . .	147
<i>Winfried Fluck</i> From Aesthetics to Political Criticism: Theories of the Early American Novel	159
<i>Philipp Schweighauser</i> Fluck and the Early American Novel . . . . .	197

<i>Winfried Fluck</i> Aesthetics and Cultural Studies . . . . .	213
<i>Rita Felski</i> “Aesthetics and Cultural Studies” Revisited . . . . .	241
<i>Winfried Fluck</i> The Imaginary and the Second Narrative: Reading as Transfer . . . . .	253
<i>Ramón Saldívar</i> Winfried Fluck and the Social Imaginary: Reading “The Imaginary and the Second Narrative” . . . . .	281
<i>Winfried Fluck</i> Reading for Recognition . . . . .	293
<i>Johannes Voelz</i> Aesthetics and Affects of Recognition . . . . .	319
<i>Winfried Fluck</i> Philosophical Premise in Literary and Cultural Theory: Narratives and Self-Alienation . . . . .	333
<i>Laura Bieger</i> Reading for Premises: Some Thoughts on Winfried Fluck’s Field Shaping Method . . . . .	361
<i>Winfried Fluck</i> Critical Theories, Populist Utopias, and Unforeseen Diversities: From the Mass Culture Debate to Self-Serve Media . . . . .	375
<i>Frank Kelleter</i> Your Culture My Clutter: Popular Media and the History of Our Digital Present . . . . .	401
<i>Winfried Fluck</i> Narratives about American Democratic Culture . . . . .	427
<i>Heinz Ickstadt</i> Searching for “American Democratic Culture” . . . . .	475
Contributors . . . . .	481

## Preface

The occasion of this volume is Winfried Fluck's eightieth birthday. The form we have chosen to celebrate his life and work – the dialogue – combines the formats of the two earlier volumes we have edited in his honor. *Romance with America? Essays on Culture, Literature, and American Studies*, from 2009, republished twenty-one of Fluck's most seminal essays, ranging from early works to what were then very recent pieces. Our idea for that volume was to map both the impressive scope and the conceptual rigor of Fluck's universe of thought. Selecting the essays that went into *Romance with America?* was daunting, if only for the fact that (re-)reading everything Fluck had published in essay form (roughly 125 articles by that time) amounted to a colossal task. It also created a first opportunity for real collaboration with a scholar whom both of us deeply admired, with email exchanges on editorial matters late into the night. The later the night, the more casual the emails became. And the longer we worked together, the more perplexed we became: Did our "boss" ever sleep? After months of intense collaboration, we were rewarded (and, to an extent, also challenged) by being offered the German "Du" (we hadn't expected to enter into this informality before finishing our habilitations).

The book that was the result of these efforts came out right in time for the conference "Imagining Culture: Norms and Forms of Public Discourse in America," hosted by the John F. Kennedy Institute of Freie Universität Berlin in the summer of 2009 to celebrate his sixty-fifth birthday. The second volume that we published in Fluck's honor, and for which we were joined by our treasured colleague Ramón Saldívar, grew out of this gathering. *The Imaginary and Its Worlds: American Studies After the Transnational Turn*, from 2011, is a collection of essays by colleagues and companions of Fluck's that explore the imaginary – one of the concepts most central to his work – in the context of the transnational turn that had just recently reorganized the field of American studies. Though the publisher – the now defunct University Press of New England – didn't allow us to call it that, *The Imaginary and Its Worlds* was in effect a classic *Festschrift*.

The present volume, finally, consists of twelve dialogues on key topics of American studies, each including a republished essay by Fluck, the earliest of which dates back to 1990, and a response by an esteemed colleague and companion written specifically for this occasion. We have chosen essays that convey a sense of his ever broadening interests and that were not included in



*Romance with America?* Several of the included pieces were in fact written after the publication of the earlier volume. For the responses, we have asked friends and colleagues from different parts of the world who met Fluck in different roles and at different points of their lives. Among our contributors are colleagues of Fluck's generation who met him – in many cases in the United States – early on in their careers. We are also joined in this collection by some of his companions from Germany who have journeyed with him through roughly a half century of American studies. Then there are his students and mentees from several generations, who have in the meantime enjoyed academic careers of their own. And finally, there are those colleagues who, while never having formally worked or studied with Fluck, have nonetheless created bonds of affinity over the years, both in Germany and abroad. It's a very illustrious group of interlocutors, to be sure, and we are grateful that each and every one among them has carefully and thoughtfully devised their own method of responding to what is surely one of the field-defining voices in the history of American studies.

That the present book is published as a volume of the *Yearbook of Research in English and American Literature (REAL)* could not be more fitting. Winfried Fluck joined its editorial board in 1993 (at the time his co-editors were Herbert Grabes and Jürgen Schläger) and served as the board's senior member up until this past year. The present set of dialogues, then, celebrates not only the career of a premier scholar but also of an editor who helped shape an important publication of English and American literary studies for three decades.

We thank Kanu Alexander Sheno, Tom Freischläger, Talia Houser, and Lorena Nauschnegg for their tireless commitment in editing and formatting the manuscript. Likewise, we are grateful to Kathrin Heyng and Lena Fleper at Narr Verlag for facilitating a swift and seamless production process. And we are happy to report that while Winfried Fluck goes about the business of American studies as energetically and enthusiastically as ever, fifteen years into his retirement his working and sleeping hours have finally adjusted to what ought to be considered normal. Even so, it has been our pleasure to have the opportunity to closely collaborate with him on this volume once more.

Laura Bieger and Johannes Voelz  
Berlin, Bochum, Frankfurt, February 2024

# The Americanization of Literary Studies

Winfried Fluck

To begin with, let me briefly define the sense in which I want to use the word “Americanization” in the following argument. Instead of the customary meaning of a covert or overt, clever or clumsy imperialist ploy, “Americanization” in this paper is meant to refer to developments that have either already taken place in the United States or are in a state of advanced development there, so that they can serve as models, or, where still contested, at least indicate some of the problems and consequences connected with them.

Of these developments, widespread private enterprise and the all-pervasive impact of market conditions upon the organization of almost all aspects of life are probably most striking and significant. In view of a fast-growing global interdependence and especially in view of the breathtaking recent changes in Eastern Europe, it seems that this trend towards private enterprise will gain even more momentum so that the United States will continue to be of interest as a country in which certain tendencies of modern democracies have had an early start and therefore can be studied for some of their consequences. Instead of complaining about an alleged “Americanization of European Literary Studies,” I therefore prefer to deal with “The Americanization of Literary Studies,” which does not so much imply a cultural contrast and polemic but a discussion of a general line of development in the field and, indeed, in the humanities in general. This development is most advanced in the U.S. but is already taking shape in Europe as well – not because Americans have found a way to skillfully lure or pressure us into that direction but because the inner logic of a growing professionalization under market conditions leaves very little choice in the matter.

In this somewhat reduced sense, then, the term “Americanization,” deprived of its customary melodramatic connotation, does not refer to scenarios of a

---

First published in *American Studies International* 28.2 (1990): 9-22. The essay has been slightly revised for this volume.

takeover or seduction but to institutional changes in the profession that, due to the remarkable strength and vitality of American scholarship – which is, after all, one of the biggest success stories of the 20th century – begin to affect and shape scholarship outside the U.S. as well. Part of the complexity of the problem is that these changes have positive as well as negative consequences and that almost all of us in the profession, whether radical or conservative, apologist or critic, are participants in this development and are profiting from it. Thus, I intend to offer the following critique neither as a European who feels threatened by an American takeover, nor as an individual who has a reason for dissatisfaction and dissent and is looking for a meta-perspective which would allow me to rise above recent developments.<sup>1</sup> There is no such meta-position outside the profession (and also no European high-road), as the example of a well-known (European) critic of modern science illustrates who, in an article which I read in preparation for this paper, lodges the by now familiar complaint about an ever growing tidal wave of publications that is caused, among other things, by a ready willingness to publish almost everything nowadays. The article points out that it seems to have become commonplace to publish papers read at conferences and then to recycle them in various versions and publications. I was duly impressed until I read at the end of the article that it, too, was the abbreviated version of a paper read at a conference whose proceedings would be published soon. The following discussion is thus intended as presentation of a number of observations whose tentative and preliminary nature is readily admitted. However, in a situation in which ambivalence, for reasons yet to be discussed, must prevail as an attitude, such a provisional mode of analyzing certain developments in the field may have the advantage of resisting easy, foregone conclusions.

Some of these developments are quite obvious. Let me begin with the most obvious one affecting not only literary studies, but the humanities and the natural sciences as well: that of ever increasing specialization. This trend has often been pointed out and criticized, but usually from outside the profession and from the perspective of the amateur or the ‘public’ intellectual who feels lost (and perhaps also threatened) by the growing inaccessibility of arguments on culture and art. As a result, such criticism has usually focused on the emergence of a professional jargon which makes public discussion of cultural matters increasingly difficult.<sup>2</sup> I think that this recurring complaint, although one may

---

1 On this point I very much agree with Stanley Fish, although I draw different conclusions. See his essay “Anti-Professionalism” (1985).

2 For one of the last examples in a long series of similar jeremiads see Jacoby, *The Last Intellectual* (1987). By now, discussions of the state of the humanities from inside and

sympathize with its underlying democratic ethos, makes the professional weary because it does not get to the heart of the problem. For even if one were willing to “translate” difficult arguments for public consumption, this would not solve the more serious problem that, as a result of specialization, we are flooded by observations and interpretations that no longer can be meaningfully related to each other. In other words, the main problem caused by specialization consists not so much in obscurantism, but in an increasing fragmentation of knowledge.

In principle, specialization, in the search for knowledge, is a useful and necessary procedure because it increases our knowledge of individual phenomena and thereby protects us from, or at least cautions us against, undue generalization.<sup>3</sup> The question, therefore, cannot be whether we should have specialization, but how much of it we can absorb before reaching a point of diminishing returns where the sheer number of observations or interpretations can no longer be integrated so that quantity minimizes the meaningfulness of knowledge. This seems particularly pertinent in cultural and literary studies, for what we have here is not only a horizontal, but a vertical extension of knowledge. In the natural sciences, to take the other extreme, knowledge is gained, strictly speaking, when one conclusion replaces another. What causes problems is the horizontal extension of knowledge that has to be connected.

However, cultural and literary studies, in fact all disciplines not dealing with systematic but historical knowledge, do not produce knowledge in the same sense as the natural sciences do, since they are interpretive sciences in which one interpretation does not necessarily replace another but merely adds another perspective which, in addition to horizontal extension, also creates a continuous vertical extension of the basic body of knowledge. In one sense, the fact that we cannot work under the assumption of gaining “definite” knowledge but can only add interpretations may appear to be liberating because it enables us to add freely to the existing body of knowledge in the field; on the other hand, one

---

outside of the profession abound, ranging from Marxists such as Ohmann, *English in America*: (1976), to liberal skeptics such as Crews, *Skeptical Engagements* (1986) and the well-known neo-conservative attack by Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind* (1987). I have abstained from drawing on this rich material because all of the observations that could lend support to my argument have their own theoretical and political context to which they should remain related. The basic difference I see between these books and my argument is that I put the main emphasis neither on political or social attitudes, nor on private fantasies of power, but on institutional structures by which left and right are equally affected.

3 The same applies to the phenomenon of professionalism itself. The following remarks are thus not based on a value opposition between “professional” and “genuine,” but are concerned with a certain stage in the development of professionalism.

may still argue that a new perspective only becomes a truly new perspective as long as, and to the extent to which, it defines itself in relation to already existing views on the subject in question. A growing specialization and the ensuing fragmentation of knowledge, however, stand in the way of setting up such relations.

What we may have to distinguish, then, is specialization as a temporary research strategy and specialization as an institutionalized mode of dealing with knowledge. Europeans may experience this problem more painfully than Americans, for whom the tendency toward specialization and fragmentation has its institutional equivalent in academic hiring practices. At American universities, literary scholars are often hired as specialists, for example, on American romanticism. In Europe, on the other hand, a professor is expected to represent his or her field more broadly, which, although it may seem to be a touching anachronism, really makes good sense. After all, the concepts that are used for delineating our areas of study, such as culture or history, are concepts designed to express the idea of a set of relations. A single event or text remains an anecdote as long as one is unable to relate it to a larger context; only then does it acquire meaning and significance.

But clearly, the fact of an increasing specialization and the ensuing fragmentation of knowledge connected with it works against such linkage. Allow me to describe but one phenomenon which I have noticed time and again while dealing with the American novel of the nineteenth-century for a book on the changing functions of fiction in American culture. Although American romanticism and realism stand in close temporal and cultural relation in the nineteenth-century and interact in many complex and intricate ways, American realism specialists' lack of knowledge about preceding literary traditions is, as a rule, rather striking and is usually limited to a vague concept of the "romance" derived from realistic polemics. On the other hand, specialists on American romanticism usually have equally reductive and polemical notions about concepts such as realism, mimesis, or representation. The consequences can be seen in the exaggerated claims about the importance of American romanticism for an understanding of America. That such claims were not merely the result of an ideological need for a unified national tradition is borne out by recent revisionist developments in the field in which the reality of disagreement and cultural conflict is readily acknowledged, but American romanticism continues to stand at the center of revision.

How could it be otherwise, one may ask, for this is after all an important area of specialization for many of these scholars; to play it down would also hold the danger of diminishing one's standing in the profession. This provides

one possible explanation for why scholars, as a rule, do not seem to be overly concerned with the consequences of fragmentation. Professionally speaking, specialization has two big advantages: (a) It provides the individual scholar with a golden opportunity to distinguish him- or herself because (b) fragmentation of knowledge, or, to put it differently “the cutting of relations,” is a useful precondition for offering new and “original” readings. In my view, it is part of a developing culture of overstatement that scholars increasingly take note of each other only as comrade or adversary and not as a predecessor who contributed some important insights which ought to be linked with one’s own.

In writing an essay on *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, for example, I noticed that the recent revisionist studies of the novel, especially the two most interesting ones, do not take note of each other. One describes the novel’s sentimentality with reference to typological thought, the other with reference to a tradition of cultural radicalism, but neither attempts to accommodate or criticize the other similarly “powerful” way of explaining the phenomenon; as equally original versions, the two readings are happy to coexist. This is for good reason, I think, because to acknowledge the validity of, or even the interest in, the other perspective would make the issue more complex and would no longer allow the type of strong overstatement of one’s own thesis that provides it with the impression of powerful originality.

This cutting off of relations repeats itself on the larger level in the current revisionist rediscovery of the novel. As interpretations in the last thirty years have shown, a novel such as *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* can be angrily dismissed when it is seen from the perspective of classical modernism and it can be highly regarded when it is related to, for example, the female culture of sentimentality in the nineteenth-century. These are two influential possibilities for looking at the novel, but I think that their respective merits as interpretations (do they see something the other does not see?) can only be assessed if related to each other. Is modernism’s point of view obsolete, or does it highlight something that even a sympathetic interpretation of the book should take into account? What is the relation, in other words, between these two influential versions that we have of the novel? In what way do they contradict, complement, or qualify each other?

I think that the phenomenon of a loss of relation (and thus of a resistance to one’s own readings) recurs on all levels and in all areas of current literary studies. Reflecting a close link between specialization and (professional) interest group politics, the result is that other areas are set up, usually by binary opposition, in stereotypical versions and often as caricatures: Romanticism is pitted against realism, sentimentality against modernism, modernism against postmodernism, representation against *jouissance* and so forth. Ethnic literatures are almost

always treated separately and popular culture studies, setting themselves up in triumphant opposition to a Marx-Brothers' version of high culture, have successfully managed to establish their own journals and institutions. What we are witnessing, in other words, is a breathtaking balkanization of the field that, ironically enough, in the process of expanding its outlook, is threatening to replace the exploration and confrontation of cultural alternatives with exercises in role taking that are limited to a special cultural realm or subculture.

There is a deadly dialectic at work here: the more relations are eliminated, the greater the chance for new interpretations; the more new work is produced, however, the greater also the tendency of diminishing the role of individual interpretations and thus the greater the difficulty to distinguish oneself. This, in fact, may provide an explanation of what is, from a European point of view, one of the most amazing – and most puzzling – aspects in the current development of the humanities at American universities in the 1980s: a renaissance of political and cultural radicalism that seems to have almost completely replaced the long dominant liberal paradigm and has become the new hegemonial system at a time at which many of these radical ideas have been discredited in Europe after a decade or more of testing them, both in writing and in political practice. In the U.S. this somewhat belated reemergence of radicalism is usually explained in political terms, as a legacy of the Reagan years, but it also makes sense to regard it as an effect of professionalization.

To be sure, radicalization and the new type of professionalism, go together well despite the fact that radicalism may have a different self-perception. In fact, I would even claim that under current conditions they reinforce each other, as American universities demonstrate that radicalism (forever happily insulated from the possibilities but also from the dangers of political practice) has been transformed into academic radicalism. It has thus gained a new function and striking professional usefulness because if the basic challenge in a highly specialized professional culture is to stand out from the rest, a radical stance can provide a welcome short-cut for gaining scholastic visibility and acquiring a reputation (in addition to a reference point for networking which is a necessity within any professional culture). If one has to sell bathtubs in a crowded market, there are basically two ways of attracting attention: either by offering a completely different model (which becomes harder and harder to do) or by distinguishing one's tub from all the others by painting it red. Radicalism promises both, although, as a rule, in most cases it only achieves the latter.

At a time in which all historical experience points the other way, radicalism's main asset is that it allows and encourages strong statements; hence its resurgence goes together with a transformation of the criteria by which

interpretations are judged and praised. The two key words here are “powerful” and “on the cutting edge” (with “dazzling” coming in as a strong third), for they stress performative qualities, namely daring and strength and not necessarily substance of argument. This makes good sense, however, because in a professional culture in which relations must be cut because of the sheer quantity of knowledge production, the critic with the greatest persuasive power has a good chance of standing out.

If radicalization provides one counter-strategy against the growing fragmentation of knowledge, theory provides another. Not surprisingly, literary and cultural theory thus play an increasingly important role in current literary studies. In my opinion, it makes sense to argue that the striking “theorization” of the humanities which is decisively and dramatically transforming American literary studies can be explained best as a response to an accelerating professionalization of the field. Theory’s usefulness for countering a trend toward increasing specialization is obvious: the more data and observations we have, the more we are in need of a theory that can bring them together (as is demonstrated by current research on the brain, for example). As Clifford Geertz points out in his well-known essay on “Thick Description,” in which he argues against the inherent representativeness of any given object of interpretation, theory alone can give meaning to material that would otherwise remain anecdotal and on the level of the particular. Again, the question should be therefore not whether we need theory, but in what form and function.

The growth of theory in literary studies has by now gained its own momentum and inner logic of development in a new stage of over-professionalization. For again – wouldn’t you know it – it is noticeable the role of theory has become, the greater the trend toward specialization. As a result, another split opens up, this time one between theory and practice – which leads to many ironies and absurdities. For example, there must be ten times as many books and articles on Roland Barthes and his seminal book *S/Z* than applications of the mode of reading he suggests in this book. In the context of increasing specialization, theory is turned into another possibility for specialized knowledge and thus for professional distinction: Where this is the case, however, the focus of theory must shift, for it becomes more important now to secure one’s place and reputation by battling one’s competitors than to provide theoretical models for the integration of research material for interpretive practice.

Let me try to characterize the transformation that theory undergoes in this process by comparing two recent publications on theory in the humanities. One may entirely disagree with Jurgen Habermas’s book on the “project of modernity;” nevertheless, it represents an attempt to pursue a thesis through



a sustained investigation that compares the major philosophical views on the issue at stake, their relationship to each other, what they contribute to the central question in the book, and in what way they differ. In contrast Terry Eagleton's introduction to literary theory, justly considered by common consensus as the best comprehensive survey of current literary theory, illustrates what may become of theory in current literary studies: instead of a thesis, it offers largely unrelated expertise. Although a book on theory, it is not a theoretical book itself, but a handbook written by an expert.<sup>4</sup>

I employ this comparison in order to evoke two possibilities of theory: one is its usefulness as a genre for the systematic and sustained pursuit of a question or project, the other its usefulness for demonstrating a special expertise. That the second possibility may be winning out in the current state of professionalization is shown, in my view, by the rapidly changing fates and fortunes of what is called Continental or Critical Theory in the United States. At first sight, the discovery and wholesale import of Continental theories – certainly another major recent development in the field –, seem to contradict any talk about “Americanization of Literary Studies;” very likely many Americans would consider it more fitting to speak of a Europeanization of the discipline. The crucial point is not where a theory comes from, however, but what use is made of it. The current theory boom, which is turning theory into yet another form of specialization with a special potential for strong statement, is primarily an American phenomenon that has not left literary theory unaffected: what prevails is no longer the pursuit of a thesis or project but a sequence of fashions in which heralded theoretical perspectives lose their authority, sometimes literally from one season to another. This rapid changing of the guards occurs not because the discarded theories have been found inadequate, but because they have lost their novel value and thus their usefulness for scholars to distinguish themselves from others as a new and strong voice.

Take the case of deconstruction for example. Deconstruction we learn – among other things from Hillis Miller's MLA address – is now considered out and replaced by a return to history and politics (283). In principle, there is no reason for complaint because, after all, as human beings we are apt to change our views. On the other hand, deconstruction made sweeping claims about the pitfalls of logocentrism which seemed to have gained widespread authority or

---

4 Jürgen Habermas, *Der Philosophische Diskurs der Moderne: Zwölf Vorlesungen* (1985); Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (1983). Eagleton has offered a sustained analysis in an earlier book, *Criticism and Ideology: A Study of Marxist Literary Theory* (1978), but increasingly books on theory in literary studies are collections of essays or pieces published separately before.

at least recognition while deconstruction was still in vogue. What has happened to these claims? Have they turned out to be invalid or only partly so? If still valid, how do they affect the possibility of historical studies? Can these claims be simply ignored? A new theoretical perspective should point out how such perspectives are related to one another. Hillis Miller is right to complain; he only forgot to mention that deconstruction's sudden rise in America may be attributed to the same factors that are now contributing to its equally rapid and sudden fall.

In a way, however, I may be asking too much. Even well-intentioned efforts toward integration are constantly undermined by the very pressures toward specialization which they try to counter. Again, we face a paradoxical, seemingly inescapable logic: Continental Theory may have been imported for its explanatory, maybe even synthesizing power, but the more importation there is, the more specialization we need to process it and the lesser the chance for integration and linkage. There is one way, perhaps, in which this trend could be countered, namely, if theory itself made issues like synthesis or integration part of its agenda. What would then arise in this unlikely instance, however, would be another chance for professional distinction and thus a new area of expertise.

The current development of theory in literary studies does not seem to be moving towards an acknowledgement of the need for integration and linkage but in the opposite direction: current development justifies the situation I have described rather than to challenge it. The most interesting current theoretician in this respect is Stanley Fish. In fact, during my last year in the United States, it was not Derrida or Foucault, but Fish who was most often referred to and discussed. One reason for this is, I think, that the neo-pragmatic or anti-foundationalist perspective to which he has moved actually poses a stronger challenge to the profession than poststructuralist semiotics because Fish, by returning the act of interpretation to a power struggle of beliefs, attributes the unreliability of interpretations to a much more tangible aspect of professional experience than the disseminative power of the sign. His theoretical position seems tailor-made for the new professionalism.<sup>5</sup>

Fish's version of what happens in interpretation is set up in deliberate opposition to hermeneutic models in which understanding is achieved by a dialogic exchange between text and reader moving toward a potential conver-

---

5 Cf., among other recent articles by Fish, "Pragmatism and Literary Theory" (1985); "Dennis Martinez and the Uses of Theory" (1987), and "Critical Self-Consciousness, Or Can We Know What We're Doing?" (1989). All are reprinted in *Doing What Comes Naturally: Change, Rhetoric, and the Practice of Theory in Literary and Legal Studies* (1989).

gence of perspectives. Since, in Fish's view, the reader will never be able to transcend his or her own beliefs in the act of understanding, no "intersubjective" ground for legitimizing the validity of an experience is possible. Interpretations gain acceptance not by their "validity," but by their power of persuasion. In understanding, therefore, as in all other aspects of life, there are only winners and losers.

Undoubtedly Fish, as we all constantly do, is reflecting here his own professional experiences in which strong statements have served him well in the academic power struggle. But I do not mean this observation to be facetious. For actually my observation confirms Fish, although it may ultimately also provide an argument against his position. It confirms him because it serves as a fitting description of a crucial relation between theory and practice: if I believe that interpretation is basically a power struggle of beliefs, and if, on account of this belief, I act accordingly, the results of this action will most likely confirm my theoretical premise. Or, to put it differently, if I approach interpretation and the problem of legitimation as a power struggle, I may create exactly the conditions which are most apt to confirm my thesis. Theory thus functions as a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy in which the claim that interpretation is nothing but a power struggle is taken to be a justification for that very same procedure.

Similarly, scholars who believe in the possibility of an intersubjective consensus on the validity or adequacy of an interpretation may be able to confirm their premise or at least arrive at the impression that they have done so by their willingness to reconsider their own interpretive hypotheses. If this is valid, however, the very choice of premises makes a difference and is thus open to rational argument; for a premise cannot justify itself by the mere fact that it works or is a description of something that comes naturally. It would be possible, for example, to justify Fish's position by a theory of self-interest, but then his position would no longer simply reflect a belief (although it may be grounded in one). The crucial question, then, is whether one considers a set of norms and interpretive criteria – which, to be sure, have to be open to constant scrutiny and revision – indispensable for literary studies or not. One may argue, in view of the historicity of understanding, that we may never be able to fully grasp our own motivations or beliefs and that any attempt at rational discussion is thus also a rationalization; but, again this argument should not be used as an argument against the possibility of self-reflection and intersubjective validation, for it simply serves in this case to protect those beliefs and interests on which it is based, including the belief which declares its own self-reflection to be impossible.

What are these interests? Why should the model of understanding as a power struggle be more attractive than the search for intersubjective legitimation? Again, the reason, I think, has to be sought in the needs of a professional culture under market conditions for which the neo-pragmatic denial of the possibility of intersubjectivity fits perfectly. What is implied in this rejection is the inevitability and indeed the cultural usefulness of interest group politics in literary studies. The implied model of social interaction in hermeneutics is a more or less benign fiction of the possibility to agree on common norms and responsibilities; its governing metaphor for society is therefore the small conversational circle.

Fish's social actors, on the other hand, meet in court, naturally an American court, where the powerful defense of one's own belief is the only possible and functional role. The court in the American system is, by definition, the site of a power struggle between self-interests in which many of the diagnosed tendencies of a professional culture recur: there is a need for strong statements in order to be heard and to drown out one's adversary; there is a strong need for performance, maybe even for a certain dose of impression-management; finally, there is the institutional necessity to consider only one's self-interest in order to be successful. To me, this also explains Fish's strong interest in legal studies and provides an explanation for the fact that his theoretical essays bear a strong structural resemblance to the way arguments are presented in court.

This paper, however, is not supposed to be one on Fish, nor is it concerned with the very tricky and complex question of whether the hermeneutic or the neo-pragmatic theory of understanding is the more plausible one. My goal here is not to argue in favor of one or the other, but to point out how theory and a certain stage of professionalism interact and thus end up justifying each other. In this context, I can see numerous reasons why the rejection of an intersubjective ground for assessing the validity and merit of an interpretation may be useful for current literary studies.

The first and foremost reason is to provide a welcome theoretical justification for what I have called the "cutting off" of relations, or to put it in broader terms, to defend oneself against the suspicion of selfishness. If I make a strong case in my own work for a particular group without considering the claims of others, I may appear to be selfish; if, however, I am assured that this is exactly what everybody else is doing out of a kind of epistemological inevitability, then I can do so with good conscience.

American studies, for example, has thus witnessed a series of declarations of independence in the last decade which has contributed to the increasingly centrifugal tendencies of the field. Again, one should be careful to register the

gains as well as the losses. A declaration of independence is a liberating move and thus a good thing; in fact, the interest group politics motivating it may be the only way in which a democracy no longer held together by a common national goal may be able to function. On the other hand, this development increases further fragmentation and thus, potentially, decreases our abilities to know each other, to interact, and to link our concerns with others. As a strategy for making one's voice heard it has no alternative; as an institutionalized procedure, it may be counterproductive.

As interest group politics are set free from the suspicion of selfishness, so is the individual scholar. This, however, intensifies a problem that has always, depending on one's point of view, plagued or enriched literary studies: since the material we deal with, in most cases, is fiction – which is something that does not have a stable referent against which it can be checked – the temptation to use interpretations for self-projection or for staging oneself has always been considerable in literary criticism. The case may be made, in fact, that the critic who interprets a literary text is always talking about him- or herself because, even as hermeneutics tells us, he or she would otherwise be unable to see anything at all. There has to be a theme emerging from the horizon in order for a meaningful *gestalt* to appear and it is reasonable to assume that this theme is somehow connected with the interpreter. Hermeneutics tries to work against the ensuing danger of mere projection by thematizing the possible breakdown of understanding into vicious circularity.

If, on the other hand, understanding is to be conceptualized as inherently and inevitably a power struggle that cannot be avoided, controlled, or transcended, one of the main sources of resistance against self-projection is eliminated: even where we try to work against the dangers of self-projection, we deceive ourselves because all we are really doing is casting ourselves into the role of a disinterested and thus superior reader. More openly than ever, interpretation can thus become an exercise in role-taking in which the daring and power of the actor emerge as the main sources of authority and validation.

Again however, I think that this tendency, although perhaps initially experienced as liberating, may be ultimately counter-productive: I take it that we read each other's work with the assumption that what somebody else has to say may be significant for ourselves. Conflicts over value and traditions thus imply taking note of one another. In the final analysis, the idea of scholarship rests on the ideal of community and linkage; in fact, it may be claimed that, even in conflict and dissent, one of the important cultural tools is to establish communication between the members of a community. Criticism, as unrepentant role-taking, increases this tendency and, in doing so, also works against it. For the like-minded, it may

make itself interesting and provide a strong focus in the search for an identity; for the rest, it becomes irrelevant. For there is no reason why we should be interested in the fantasies of others, unless these fantasies provide a possible point of interaction.

Many of the aspects with which I have dealt in this section converge in the problem of how to deal with resistance to a mere projection of meaning. Traditionally, theory has been one form of “resistance” because it compels us to place our reading within a systematic framework of relations and urges us to reflect on our own presuppositions; in its “over-professionalized” shape, however, it is, to the contrary, turning into a tool for justifying the elimination of such resistance. “Method” has been another potential source of resistance because it urges us to account for our procedure; under the new conditions, however, method becomes performance. Finally, the idea of the aesthetic has been a third source of resistance because it urges us to account for an experience that can be shared and discussed in ongoing acts of communicative interaction.

The current revisionism in literary studies makes sense when it attacks a particular version of the aesthetic and as long as critics claim that this particular historical version must be considered the only legitimate aesthetic norm. But the attacks on the aesthetic are less convincing where they discredit the concept altogether because what they do is confuse the notion of the aesthetic in literary studies with a particular historical version of it. Consequently, the plausible ideas that there is something like an “aesthetic” function and that fiction can be considered a specific mode of communication with its own communicative possibilities and effects are given up in favor of the idea of discourse in order to make the fictional text part of a network of hegemonial or subversive gestures. Such a move suits a state of professionalization in which the idea of a specific aesthetic dimension of the literary text can function as a potential barrier for powerful new performances because it implies a recourse to experience.

How would it be possible, for example, to read a book such as Edward Bellamy’s *Looking Backward* (1887) as a supreme assertion of the idea of individuality when reading the novel, as a long history of reception shows, tends to evoke experiences of order, conformity, and control? Such a reading may one day become possible, however, because professionalization has a tendency to undermine or even eliminate the authority of such reading effects. After a specialist, let us say on the Progressive period, has dealt with the novel in class for the fiftieth time, there will most likely be very little “experience,” aesthetic or other, left and the more articles, symposia, workshops and anthologies we have on the topic, the more this will be true. This, in turn, sets the interpreter free, indeed challenges him or her, to boldly try out something entirely new

and different, perhaps even the opposite of everything that has ever been said before on the subject. And this, in turn, not only narrows down the chance for further “powerfully original” readings, but puts pressure on other critics to become even holder in suggesting new possibilities for reading the text. The result is something for which we already have unmistakable contours: literary (and perhaps other) studies as a form of permanent overstatement.

To use the term overstatement implies that something which may be sound and sensible is exaggerated. One might argue, then, that even in overstating their case readings of this nature add to our knowledge; in fact, one may even extend this argument by claiming – with good reason, I think – that the system, by a cunning logic, thus manages to tease out ever new bursts and waves of insight which can then be sifted through and secured by another (less performance-minded, boring) scholarly species. In arguing this way, however, one must assume a well working division of labor in the discipline between two different views of its purpose and procedures. In such an argument, each of the two approaches would profit from, but also depend on, the other. Or to put it differently: a professional culture of overstatement could justify itself by tacitly presupposing the corrective force of that which it constantly wants to radicalize and out-perform for the purpose of professional distinction. But this argument is only valid as long as the radical challenge is not too successful in establishing its own values as the dominant norm. In the current situation, I think, radicalism tacitly depends on what it criticizes harshly.

In talking about “The Americanization of Literary Studies,” there is good news and bad news then. The “bad” news – at least for those who think that some of the recent aspects of professionalization create problems – is that, either on the intellectual or the institutional level, it is hard to imagine an alternative to most of the developments I have sketched out. On the intellectual level, one of the conclusions may lie in an appeal to work against separation and segregation of knowledge, and to encourage linkage and integration. But these have been encouraged (and, to a certain degree, realized) in American studies and yet the professional momentum of the field has ultimately increased its centrifugal tendencies to a point of almost no return. Although desirable, “integrational” moves will thus have their limits; in fact, it seems reasonable to assume that, instead of serving as a remedy, they would most likely lead to a further area of specialization called “Integrational Studies.”

The main problem in arguing for an alternative to overspecialization and performance-for-its-own-sake may lie, however, in the danger of looking for help in a new moralism, drawing either on a conservative fantasy of moral guardianship, or on a neo-Marxist insistence on political “relevance.” Ironically

enough, if one does not want to do this, the only remaining role is that of the professional itself. In fact, an analysis of the situation that seeks to avoid a new moralism can only be another version of professionalism. If this is the case, an answer to the problems I have outlined can only be found *within* professionalism, not *outside* of it. And this may provide, if not exactly a piece of good news, at least a glimmer of hope (and a new source of “resistance” as I have used the term in this essay). Together with an increasing and ever accelerating professionalization, discussions of its goals, function, and changing conditions also increase in quantity and with them the profession’s potential for self-reflection and self-criticism. True, it is to be feared that this will soon become just another area of exchange between experts. But it is also to be hoped that such development will in turn generate new responses to, and analyses of, exactly this situation so that the race between tortoise and hare may be kept open, at least for the time being.

## Works Cited

- Bloom, Allan. *The Closing of the American Mind: Education and the Crisis of Reason*. New York: Simon, 1987.
- Crews, Frederick. *Skeptical Engagements*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1986.
- Eagleton, Terry. *Literary Theory: An Introduction*. Minneapolis, MN: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1983.
- . *Criticism and Ideology: A Study of Marxist Literary Theory*. London: Verso, 1978.
- Fish, Stanley. “Anti-Professionalism.” *New Literary History* 17.1 (1985): 89-108.
- . “Critical Self-Consciousness, Or Can We Know What We’re Doing?” *Doing What Comes Naturally: Change, Rhetoric, and the Practice of Theory in Literary and Legal Studies*. Durham, NC: Duke Univ. Press, 1989. 436-468.
- . “Dennis Martinez and the Uses of Theory.” *Yale Law Review* 96.1 (1987): 771-1798.
- . “Pragmatism and Literary Theory.” *Critical Inquiry* 11.1 (1985): 433-458.
- Habermas, Jürgen. *Der Philosophische Diskurs der Moderne: Zwölf Vorlesungen*. Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 1985.
- Jacoby, Russel. *The Last Intellectual: American Culture in the Age of Academe*. New York: Basic, 1987.
- Miller, J. Hillis. “Presidential Address 1986: The Triumph of Theory, The Resistance to Reading, and the Question of Material Base.” *PMLA* 102.3 (1987): 281-291.
- Ohmann, Richard. *English in America: A Radical View of the Professions*. New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1976.





# The Continuing “Americanization of Literary Studies”

Leonard Cassuto

Only connect! ... Only connect the prose and  
the passion, and both will be exalted, and  
human love will be seen at its height.  
Live in fragments no longer.

– E.M. Forster, *Howards End*

Reading Winfried Fluck’s “The Americanization of Literary Studies” in 2023 was a resonant experience. Writing more than thirty years earlier, Fluck demonstrated a prescience rarely seen in any form of inquiry. Taking stock of the enterprise during somewhat better times for the humanities, Fluck identified the dominance in literary studies not so much of American ideas as American practice. He called the practice “professionalization,” and he located it in what he called “ever increasing specialization” (“Americanization,” in this volume 10).

That charge is all too familiar today, and that’s one of the reasons that Fluck’s analysis deserves our attention still. Another reason is because of the ethical implications of what he describes, and their continuing relevance not just to our own times but to the whole academic enterprise in the United States.

Fluck points to “the inner logic of a growing professionalization under market conditions” that leaves scholars “very little choice” but to fall in line and deliver increasingly specialized analysis (9). Fluck doesn’t oppose specialization as such. Instead, he’s concerned about certain uses he saw it being put to. “As a result of specialization,” Fluck says, “we are flooded by observations and interpretations that no longer can be meaningfully related to each other.” As a consequence, we face “an increasing fragmentation of knowledge” whose “quantity minimizes [its] meaningfulness” (11). In other words, everyone does their own particular and specific things without considering how their things relate to other people’s particular and specific things. It’s like a music room full of soloists all playing, *fortissimo*, at the same time.

I want first to spotlight the terms that Fluck uses. He doesn't say that "the marketplace" or "the professional arena" has been flooded by unconnected observations. Instead, he says that "we" are vexed by this problem. In Fluck's eyes, overspecialization is a problem that a community – a "we" – inflicts on itself through the questionable professional practice of its members. At the center of Fluck's interpretation are the people – ourselves – who do the professional work. I will return to this observation later on.

Since Fluck wrote "Americanization," the internet has become a permanent amplifier of this cacophony of disjointed interpretation. It has exponentially increased the amount of information that pours out, and it has simultaneously decreased the power and influence of gatekeepers. John Guillory – to whose more recent work I will presently turn – made the absurd but painfully true observation some years ago that scholars these days are writing so fast that they don't have a chance to read (Guillory 9-13). Everybody is writing, but for whom? If everyone else is also busy writing, who is the reading audience that tries to keep up?

One of Fluck's most trenchant points is that the design of the system actually discourages keeping up at all. Because it cuts the scholar off from other scholars and their ideas, professionalized specialization readily enables "new and 'original' readings" that don't have to do with anyone else's readings. This specialization, Fluck says, produces new knowledge of a lower quality because it lacks outward reach to broaden its community. Instead, this knowledge inhabits "a culture of overstatement" in which "scholars increasingly take note of each other only as comrade or adversary and not as a predecessor who contributed some important insights which ought to be linked to one's own" (13). Fluck saw in this behavior "a breathtaking balkanization of the field," a specialization that opposes what he calls "linkage," an important keyword (17).

But wait, there's more. Fluck connects unlinked specialization to a "political and cultural radicalism." This radicalism displaces "the long-dominant liberal paradigm" in American academia. Fluck suggests that this academic radicalism isn't just "a legacy of the Reagan years," as it may reasonably be viewed, "but it also makes sense to regard it as an effect of professionalization" (14). The reason is expediency: "A radical stance can provide a welcome short-cut for gaining scholastic visibility" because "It allows and encourages strong statements" (14). In other words, this radicalism isn't very radical at all. Nor is it especially political, at least not in relation to government or public affairs. Within the economy of the marketplace of ideas, we could even call it conservative: everyone jockeys for position in the prestige game without questioning the

rules of that game.<sup>1</sup> And those rules construe academic achievement narrowly, exclusively in terms of certain types of publication.

The connection between literary study and politics has increased in salience since Fluck published his essay. Literary critics in the United States have sought to interject their voices into all manner of political arenas. The well-chronicled effort of the American Studies Association to have its say about the Middle East is one example among many.<sup>2</sup>

In his important new book, *Professing Criticism*, Guillory also critiques the rise of specialization in the practice of modern criticism, and his argument similarly points to the vexed relation of literary study with political engagement. Guillory's choice of terms conveys his view starkly. He describes specialization as a disability. His name of that disability, which arises from "the specialization of cognitive labor," is "deformation" (5). For Guillory, "professional deformation" leads to an "overestimation of aim" by literary scholars. As the enterprise of literary study has diminished in size and visibility, Guillory observes, its practitioners have made increasingly strenuous claims for it (79).

Fluck's radicalism and Guillory's overstated claims are two names for the same thing, viewed from different perspectives at an interval of more than thirty years. Where Fluck sees antisocial careerism, Guillory sees errant professional practice on a long-term, global scale.

To Guillory, literary studies has veered out of its lane. To get back on course, he suggests, we should "begin with the recognition that literary critics can enter the realm of publicity only as experts *on literature*." But this affirmation has a rub: "If literature is the basis of our entitlement to enter the public sphere, what does this imply for our public-facing representation of what we do?" For Guillory, it boils down to legitimacy (which he calls "justification") – he thinks that literary critics claim more of it than they're entitled to (80).

Guillory's book has received a remarkable reception, and much engagement with it has centered on the proper place of politics in the critical enterprise.

---

1 Another important side effect of professionalized specialization that Fluck noticed was the increasing importance of literary theory. In retrospect, Fluck was writing near theory's high-water mark, at the same moment when "literary theory" briefly emerged as a specialty that became a hiring category within American English departments. "In the context of increasing specialization," writes Fluck, "theory is turned into another possibility for specialized knowledge and thus for professional distinction" (15). In the name of linkage, Fluck suggests that "A new theoretical perspective should point out how such perspectives are related to one another" (17). These many years later, the opportunity for distinction through theory has come and gone: as any graduate student will tell you, we are all theorists now, more or less.

2 For example, "Boycott of Israeli Academic Institutions."

Guillory says that literary critics may certainly encompass politics, but criticism should not be political (or activist) as such. Parsing these distinctions may lead one's eyes to cross.<sup>3</sup> Jonathan Arac cuts meaningfully through the blur when he says, *pace* Guillory, that “judgments made about literature and its study connect directly to the national culture and carry real political implication” (Arac, in this volume 91).

Guillory is wary of any such connection. Any hope for solutions to the structural problems that vex literary study lie, for Guillory, in critical practice itself: we should “resist overestimation” and just keep engaging in the study of “literary artifacts” in an open and generous way, and hope for the best. He ends with the idea that we should value this “cultural transmission” for itself, because “society would be the poorer without it” (386).

Faith in the long-term value of cultural transmission is pretty thin gruel for a humanities professor whose department is in danger of being eliminated, or for a young Ph.D. who's teaching four classes a term as a contingent academic laborer, or a graduate student agitated about what the future may hold. But from Guillory's high-altitude perspective, it's the sensible course. From Guillory's historical-sociological vantage point, the problems may be imagined as tectonic plates rubbing against each other slowly, with seismic changes resulting only from major events like wars or – though this remains to be seen – pandemics.

This detached and disembodied overview, however rational it may be, does not effect reform where reform needs effecting. Movement from a dismal status quo can begin with point of view – and here we may turn back to Fluck for inspiration. Unlike Guillory's, Fluck's perspective remains gratifyingly earthbound. He looks at the activity of people doing professional work, for when we talk about professions, professionalism, or professionalization, we are necessarily talking about people doing work. There's no such thing as a profession without workers.

Fluck does not call for literary critics to refrain from politics. Instead, he suggests that the stridency with which they engage with politics has a venial and antisocial aspect. If people behave badly, we might look for ways to persuade them to behave differently and change their workplace.

The laborers in that workplace demand the attention of anyone who looks at the academic profession. The academic job market had already tightened at the time that Fluck wrote “The Americanization of Literary Studies,” and the

---

3 Guillory's argument that criticism should describe its separation from politics has already proved a lightning rod for reviewers of *Professing Criticism*. See, for example, the exchange between Bruce Robbins and Guillory in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* that begins with Robbins's “John Guillory's Non-Alignment Pact.”

contingent academic labor market (that is, the adjunct labor pool) had swelled correspondingly. The situation has worsened since "Americanization" appeared, and it's dramatically worse now, unrecovered from a collapse in tenured and tenure-track jobs resulting from the financial crisis of 2008.

But in truth, American academics – including literary studies professionals – have been misunderstanding our own economics since the 1970s. After a decade of full employment amid widespread expansion of the higher-education sector in the 1960s, the industry contracted beginning in the 1970s. Instead of understanding that the 1960s were an anomaly, U.S. educators responded by waiting out what they believed would be a temporary lull before a presumed return to abundance. Fifty years later, we're still waiting – but at least now there's a growing understanding that we must address the reality faced by our students and not their grandparents.<sup>4</sup>

Guillory says that the problem is not with the market but with the organization of the enterprise. Practicing his own form of historical sociology in which people turn into dots moving pathetically to and fro when viewed from thousands of feet above, Guillory talks himself into an elegiac quietism.

Fluck wants to save the enterprise – and I want to believe with him that we can. We should start with his observation that critical radicalism – political or otherwise – can bring you notice in what even then was a blighted academic job market.<sup>5</sup> Fluck describes a contest between two metaphors for humanistic practice. First there is the conversational circle, which features a search for common ground: this leads to linkage, that keyword of Fluck's essay – and, I realize, my own. Second, there is the courtroom, where one view engages in a contest for survival against another, with the loser sentenced to banishment and exile. From where Fluck was sitting in 1990, the courtroom was winning. Its winning streak extends to the present. This victory leads to a tragedy of the critical commons that Fluck describes this way: "If I make a strong case in my own work for a particular group without considering the claims of others, I may appear to be selfish; if, however, I am assured that this is exactly what everybody else is doing out of a kind of epistemological inevitability, then I can do so with

---

4 A statistic that reveals just how unrepresentative the 1960s were in terms of academic economics and employment: During the 1960s alone, more faculty positions were created than in the entire 300+ year history of American higher ed leading up to that decade (Menand 452).

5 As Robbins points out in his recent review of Guillory's opus, this logic is right out of the work of Pierre Bourdieu: "For Bourdieu, righteous politics talk was merely a jockeying for position, a competition for dominance within a given institution, the pursuit of personal and disciplinary self-interest. Crying politics is never anything more than a move in a game" (Robbins).