

ENGLISH, 2000 A.D.

ALTHOUGH others have a way of identifying me often as a "futurist," I feel less comfortable trying to predict the future than trying to deal with the present, which will make the future. Describing the present is exceedingly difficult. You always describe a fictitious and false present. And unless you can deal with the real present, how can you deal with the future at all, much less predict it? With this sincere demurrer, here goes.

English is one of the new subjects in universities. Physics, astronomy, astrophysics, chemistry, biology, psychology (not all under those names), some mathematicized music, ethics, metaphysics, medicine, law, and theology, as well as the classical languages, all date back to the founding of the universities some 800 years ago, and even beyond that. When English first began to become a university subject a little over a century ago (it was not even an elementary school subject in Shakespeare's day), it was unimaginably dull and wooden. The student in English universities qualified in his final examinations for a B.A. in English by rising to challenges such as these (these are real examination questions, not fabrications): "Describe briefly the plot of *Gorboduc*. Who wrote *Gammer Gurton's Needle* and when? Give the chief facts in the life of Shakespeare until 1603."

Since then, we have improved somewhat. It would have been hard not to. Like other language and literature studies and many other humanistic studies, English has been enriched by accepting the fact that for full understanding of language and of literature one must somehow take all knowledge as one's province. Anything and everything can bear on a text: cultural history and other kinds of history as well as the specifically literary history of English, Latin, Greek, Hebrew, and indeed all languages, critical theory, linguistics, depth psychology, anthropology, urban affairs and minority culture studies, art and music, human geography, philosophy, theology, comparative religion and other comparative studies, and so on endlessly. English is the back door to everything. At its worst, the result has been the English teacher and/or critic posed as a superguru—fake psychologist, economist, metaphysician, moral theologian, systematic theologian, and political programmer. At its best, the result has been insight into man's works and existence at depths never before achieved with the explicitness we demand today, and criticism with a breadth and significance new to the world.

I would not want to think long about what the English teaching of the future may and doubtless will be at its worst: a narcissistic exercise in an intellectual vacuum, consisting of study of works about ourselves and the extensions of ourselves we label environment, combined with practice in writing which is either stilted or formless or both. I suspect that at its best English in the future will continue to develop by reaching out and pulling in around itself as many as possible of the other

always burgeoning humanistic subjects (including the sciences in their manifold humanistic dimensions). Many of the other humanistic disciplines will also be engaged in similar fraternization. Born sanguine, I look less for interdisciplinary conflict than for interdisciplinary cooperation.

Perhaps the end result will be the emergence of a multidisciplinary field of study, which we can hope will not be invincibly chaotic and which might be styled anthropology in the deepest sense of this term, with various foci, those for English being around the verbally produced artifact. How this will be managed in terms of academic organization, we shall have to see.

—Walter J. Ong, S.J., *Professor of English*

Classical Languages, 2000 A.D.

THE Classical fossils will still be around and now fearlessly predict that in their field much more information will be available and computers will make that information accessible. Continued finds in archeology will piece together presently disparate things. We will know more about the history of the languages and understand better their peculiar genius. The scholar of Greek will better integrate his research and insight with the study of contemporary cultures and the scholar of American culture will work with him toward a more profound understanding of their origins and the integral development of the tradition of Western civilization. A far more unified approach to the study of literature, particularly, will prevail. But in some respects there will be no change for there are certain questions that each generation must ask and answer anew. So scholars will still be probing the way that Homer and Sophocles and Socrates saw man in his relation to the mystery of his existence; they will still try to understand the cast of mind that brought the literary genres into being, that introduced the Western world to philosophy and science. Their fascination will still be there because in the year 2000 man will still have the rational desire to know the manner in which he was shaped—the form that was given to him by his Greco-Roman past and its continued influence through time.

—John J. Welch, S.J., *Chairman, Classical Languages*

Geography, 2000 A.D.

PERHAPS the change one can expect to have occurred in Geography by the year 2000 A.D. is best illustrated simply by the fact that "Geography" will no longer exist, but in its place will be a new discipline which is being spawned today by the "new" geographers. Regional Science, Spatial Science, or perhaps Spatial Analysis will be the label attached to this new discipline.

The research tools and techniques of this new discipline will center around computers and remote sensing devices. Maps and globes, long the geographer's trusted allies, will no longer be of primary importance.