Cultural studies: an introduction

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Preliminary definitions

Colin Sparks (Chapter 1) highlights the difficulties involved in trying to define cultural studies with any degree of precision:

It is not possible to draw a sharp line and say that on one side of it we can find the proper province of cultural studies. Neither is it possible to point to a unified theory or methodology which are characteristic to it or of it. A veritable rag-bag of ideas, methods and concerns from literary criticism, sociology, history, media studies, etc., are lumped together under the convenient label of cultural studies.

Although Sparks's essay dates from 1977, problems of definition still remain for an author writing almost 20 years later. Therefore, although it is possible to point to degree programmes, to journals, to conferences and to associations, there is no simple answer to the question, 'what is cultural studies?' . . . Traditionally, an academic discipline is defined by three criteria: first, there is the object of study; secondly, there are the basic assumptions which underpin the method(s) of approach to the object of study; and thirdly, there is the history of the discipline itself.

John Fiske (Chapter 6), maintains that 'culture' in cultural studies 'is neither aesthetic nor humanist in emphasis, but political'. What he means by this is that the object of study in cultural studies is not culture defined in the narrow sense, as the objects of aesthetic excellence ('high art'); nor culture defined in an equally narrow sense, as a process of aesthetic, intellectual and spiritual development; but culture understood, in Raymond Williams's famous appropriation from anthropology, as 'a particular way of life, whether of a people, a period or a group' (1976, 90). This is a definition of culture which can embrace the first two definitions but also, and crucially, it can range beyond the social exclusivity and narrowness of these to include the study of popular culture. Although cultural studies cannot (or should not) be reduced to the study of popular culture, it is certainly the case that the study of popular culture is central to the project of cultural studies. As Cary Nelson
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(Chapter 16) points out, ‘people with ingrained contempt for popular culture can never fully understand the cultural studies project’. But it is also the case, as argued by Richard Johnson (Chapter 5), that ‘all social practices can be looked at from a cultural point of view, for the work they do, subjectively’. Johnson defines cultural studies as the study of ‘historical forms of consciousness or subjectivity’. Defined in this way, it must
decentre ‘the text’ as an object of study. ‘The text’ is no longer studied for its own sake, nor even for the social effects it may be thought to produce, but rather for the subjective or cultural forms which it realises and makes available. The text is only a means in cultural studies; strictly, perhaps, it is a raw material from which certain forms (e.g. of narrative, ideological problematic, mode of address, subject position, etc.) may be abstracted. . . . But the ultimate object of cultural studies is not . . . the text, but the social life of subjective forms at each moment of their circulation, including their textual embodiments.

John Frow and Meaghan Morris (Chapter 22) take a slightly different view:

There is a precise sense in which cultural studies uses the concept of text as its fundamental model. . . . Rather than designating a place where meanings are constructed in a single level of inscription (writing, speech, film, dress . . . ), it works as an interleaving of ‘levels’. If a shopping mall [for example] is conceived on the model of textuality, then this ‘text’ involves practices, institutional structures and the complex forms of agency they entail, legal, political, and financial conditions of existence, and particular flows of power and knowledge, as well as a particular multilayered semantic organisation; it is an ontologically mixed entity, and one for which there can be no privileged or ‘correct’ reading. It is this, more than anything else, that forces cultural studies’ attention to the diversity of audiences for or users of the structures of textuality it analyses – that is, to the open-ended social life of texts – and that forces it, thereby, to question the authority or finality of its own readings.

Moreover, as Frow and Morris make clear, texts exist only within networks of intertextual relations. To study a ‘text’ means to locate it across a range of competing moments of inscription, representation and struggle. In other words, cultural studies seeks to keep in equilibrium the different moments of cultural production – material production, symbolic production, textual production, and the ‘production in use’ of consumption. To narrow one’s focus to one moment only, and think this will adequately account for the others, is to think and act (to borrow a phrase from the good old days of certainty) ‘ideologically’.

Cultural studies also regards culture as political in a quite specific sense, one which reveals the dominant political position within cultural studies. Typically, Frow and Morris (Chapter 22) conceive of culture ‘not as organic expression of a community, nor as an autonomous sphere of aesthetic forms, but as a contested and confictual set of practices of representation bound up with the processes of formation and re-formation of social groups’. Perhaps the best-known elaboration of this conception of culture comes from Stuart Hall (1981, 239). He describes popular culture, for example, as ‘an arena of consent and resistance. It is partly where hegemony arises, and where it is secured. It is not a sphere where socialism, a
socialist culture – already fully formed – might be simply "expressed". But it is one of the places where socialism might be constituted. That is why "popular culture matters". Others within cultural studies might not express their attitude to popular culture quite in these terms, but they would certainly share Hall's concern to think culture politically. Johnson (Chapter 5) explains this in terms of three main premisses regarding culture:

The first is that cultural processes are intimately connected with social relations, especially with class relations and class formations, with sexual divisions, with the racial structuring of social relations and with age oppressions as a form of dependency. The second is that culture involves power and helps to produce asymmetries in the abilities of individuals and social groups to define and realise their needs. And third, which follows the other two, is that culture is neither an autonomous nor an externally determined field, but a site of social differences and struggles.

Tony Bennett (Chapter 19) makes the case for cultural studies to change its understanding of culture. Central to his argument for the introduction of 'policy' into cultural studies is a changed definition of culture, from one which defines it in semantic terms to one that sees it as a governmental practice for transforming both mental and physical behaviour.

All the basic assumptions of cultural studies are Marxist. This is not to say that all practitioners of cultural studies are Marxists, but that cultural studies is itself grounded in Marxism. Marxism informs cultural studies in two fundamental ways. First, to understand the meanings of culture we must analyse it in relation to the social structure and its historical contingency. Although constituted by a particular social structure with a particular history, culture is not studied as a reflexion of this structure and history. As Williams (Chapter 8) makes clear, history and culture are not separate entities. It is never a question of reading a text against its historical background or using the text to illustrate an already-formulated account of a historical moment – history and text are inscribed in each other and are embedded together as a part of the same process. Cultural studies insists that culture's importance derives from the fact that it helps constitute the structure and shape the history. As Hall (Chapter 21) explains, 'what cultural studies has helped me to understand is that the media [for example] play a part in the formation, in the constitution, of the things that they reflect. It is not that there is a world outside, "out there", which exists free of the discourses of representation. What is "out there" is, in part, constituted by how it is represented'. Second, cultural studies assumes that capitalist industrial societies are societies divided unequally along ethnic, gender, generational and class lines. It contends that culture is one of the principal sites where this division is established and contested: culture is a terrain on which takes place a continual struggle over meaning, in which subordinate groups attempt to resist the imposition of meanings which bear the interests of dominant groups. It is this which makes culture ideological.

Ideology is without doubt the central concept in cultural studies. James W. Carey (Chapter 4) even suggests that 'British cultural studies could be
described just as easily and perhaps more accurately as ideological studies'. There are many competing definitions of ideology, but it is the formulation established by Hall (1982) which is generally accepted as the dominant definition within cultural studies. Working within a framework of Antonio Gramsci’s concept of hegemony, Hall developed a theory of ‘articulation’ to explain the processes of ideological struggle (Hall’s use of ‘articulation’ plays on the term’s double meaning: to express and to join together). He argues that cultural texts and practices are not inscribed with meaning, guaranteed once and for all by the intentions of production; meaning is always the result of an act of ‘articulation’ (an active process of ‘production in use’). The process is called ‘articulation’ because meaning has to be expressed, but it is always expressed in a specific context, a specific historical moment, within a specific discourse(s). Thus expression is always connected (articulated) to and conditioned by context. Hall also draws on the work of the Russian theorist Valentin Volosinov. Volosinov (1973) argues that meaning is always determined by context of articulation. Cultural texts and practices are ‘multiaccentual’; that is, they can be articed with different ‘accents’ by different people in different contexts for different politics. Meaning is therefore a social production; the world has to be made to mean. A text or practice or event is not the issuing source of meaning, but a site where the articulation of meaning – variable meaning(s) – can take place. And because different meanings can be ascribed to the same text or practice or event, meaning is always a potential site of conflict. Thus the field of culture is for cultural studies a major site of ideological struggle; a terrain of ‘incorporation’ and ‘resistance’; one of the sites where hegemony is to be won or lost.

According to Hall’s influential account (Chapter 2) of the formation and development of British cultural studies, the key point to understand is that ‘there are no “absolute beginnings” and few unbroken continuities. . . . What is important are the significant breaks – where old lines of thought are disrupted, older constellations displaced, and elements, old and new, are regrouped around a different set of premises and themes’. Hall charts the history of cultural studies from its ‘founding’ in the late 1950s, through its institutionalization at the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) in 1964, and the subsequent theoretical moments of culturalism, structuralism and Gramscian Marxism. Other essays collected here elaborate and extend this history to include the moments of poststructuralism and postmodernism (see, for example, Franklin et al., Chapter 15). Others extend the account geographically, charting the movement of cultural studies from Birmingham to Australia and the USA.

Cultural studies: a political project

Johnson (Chapter 5) argues that cultural studies is political, ‘but not in an immediate pragmatic sense’. Nelson (Chapter 16) makes a similar point: although ‘cultural studies allies itself with and helps theorize political action . . . political action and cultural studies are not interchangeable’. Nevertheless, as Alan O’Connor (Chapter 10) contends, ‘The tradition of
cultural studies is not one of value-free scholarship but of political commitment'. Frow and Morris (Chapter 22) make a similar point: 'cultural studies is partisan in its insistence on the political dimension of knowledge. . . . The intellectual project of cultural studies is always at some level marked by a discourse of social involvement'.

In the early days of the Birmingham CCCS, cultural studies was regarded, at least by Hall (1990a, 12), as 'politics by other means'. Part of, or perhaps central to, the project of cultural studies (at least from the 1970s) was the production of what Gramsci (1971) calls 'organic intellectuals'. According to Hall (1992, 281), 'there is no doubt in my mind that we at the CCCS were trying to find an institutional practice in cultural studies that might produce an organic intellectual'.

Bennett (Chapter 19) is more than a little sceptical of Hall's reading of cultural studies as a political project to establish organic intellectuals. According to Bennett, 'to attribute such a function to an intellectual project which has and continues to be based primarily in the academy suggests a degree of misrecognition of its relations to the real conditions of its existence that can only be described as ideological'. Frow and Morris (Chapter 22) suggest that 'In Australian conditions . . . Bennett's judgment may be too harsh'. Nevertheless, the change in cultural studies from postgraduate area of research to undergraduate teaching (students take undergraduate degrees in cultural studies – are taught cultural studies) may mean that many of the grander claims made in the 1970s are no longer applicable or relevant in the 1990s. Rather than ask 'what is cultural studies?' perhaps the more pressing question is 'whom is cultural studies for?'

According to Michael Green (Chapter 3), it is a question of locating the nearest appropriate constituency:

Inside the the Centre [for Contemporary Cultural Studies], groups attempted to think of their work in relation to the problems of the nearest appropriate constituency, which might not always be that of teachers in higher or secondary education. For example, there could be a connection between media research and the interests of media workers; between research on popular literature and alternative publishers and bookshops, or the Federation of Worker Writers; between studies of the cultural formation of teenage working-class girls and strategies of feminist 'youth work'.

In a response to a paper by Hall (1992, 294), bell hooks argued that, ultimately, the politics of cultural studies are to be found in its pedagogy:

Really responding to students who go see Do the Right Thing and come back and say 'Look, we took your class, we understand this feminist standpoint, but we also think Spike Lee is a down brother so how do we deal with what we feel we saw in this particular cultural production?' To me, that's the exciting dimension of cultural studies, that it can take place, not as me writing a privatized article, but as a response to students asking what type of critical thinking allows them to engage this cultural production in a way that informs our political practice.

Williams (Chapter 8) contends that the future of cultural studies (at least in Britain) should be to intervene in 16–18 education to challenge 'a definition of industrial training which would have sounded crude in the 1860s'.
Henry A. Giroux (1994), however, argues that cultural studies needs to rethink the practice of pedagogy; to engage in what he calls ‘critical pedagogy’. Giroux’s point is that cultural studies frequently fails to take seriously questions of pedagogy. Too often, according to Giroux, those working in the field of cultural studies adhere to ‘the notion of pedagogy as a transparent vehicle for transmitting truth and knowledge’ (1994, 130). But pedagogy does not represent a neutral site, free from the operations of power and politics. Far from being the simple transmission of ready-made information, pedagogy is for Giroux a site of struggle, a terrain where the complex relations between knowledge and power are worked over.

As part of his project, Giroux distinguishes between a pedagogy of theory and a pedagogy of theorizing. Put simply, this is the difference between theory as a body of knowledge to be learnt and theory as an activity to be practised. In the former, theory is taught as a means of understanding the world; in the latter, theorizing is encouraged as a pedagogical practice in which students become actual participants in the use of theory. Although both are crucial to the production of ‘critical pedagogy’, too often it is only the former which actually happens.

Post-Marxism: a crisis in cultural studies?

‘Crisis’, as Lidia Curti (1992, 134) points out, ‘has been the password of the field from Hoggart to . . . Hebdige’. Angela McRobbie (1992, 719) agrees: ‘The word crisis is one which appears with alarming regularity in the discourses of cultural studies’. For McRobbie (ibid.), the current crisis is perhaps better understood as a ‘panic’ engendered by an undermining of the Marxist paradigm:

Marxism, a major point of reference for the whole cultural studies project in the UK, has been undermined not just from the viewpoint of the postmodern critics who attack its teleological propositions, its meta-narrative status, its essentialism, economism, Eurocentrism, and its place within the whole Enlightenment project, but also, of course, as a result of the events in Eastern Europe, with the discrediting of much of the socialist project.

As McRobbie points out (ibid.), the debate about Marxism in cultural studies has yet to take place. The role of Marxism in cultural studies is still uncertain, but what does seem to be the case is that the return to a pre-postmodern Marxism as marked out by critics like Fredric Jameson (1984) and David Harvey (1989) is untenable because the terms of that return are predicated on prioritizing economic relations and economic determinations over cultural and political relations by positioning these latter in a mechanical and reductionist role.

However, there is a sense in which cultural studies was always-already post-Marxist. As Hall (1992, 279) makes clear,

There was never a prior moment when cultural studies and Marxism represented a perfect theoretical fit. From the beginning . . . there was always-already the question of the great inadequacies, theoretically and politically,
the resounding silences, the great evasions of Marxism – the things that Marx did not talk about or seem to understand which were our privileged object of study: culture, ideology, language, the symbolic. These were always-already, instead, the things which had imprisoned Marxism as a mode of thought, as an activity of critical practice – its orthodoxy, its doctrinal character, its determinism, its reductionism, its immutable law of history, its status as a metanarrative. That is to say, the encounter between British cultural studies and Marxism has first to be understood as the engagement with a problem – not a theory, not even a problematic.

Therefore, although speaking of cultural studies as a political project is to articulate, sooner or later, its relationship with Marxism, and while it is clear that virtually all its founding assumptions are Marxist, it is not the case that cultural studies is ‘simply’ Marxism in disguise – what Green (Chapter 3) calls ‘a “cover” for a revised and qualified marxism’. Marxism was one of the things it struggled against. As Green points out, cultural studies was born in a double refusal. On the one hand, it ‘refused the elitism of high culture and the great tradition’ and, on the other, ‘it was equally opposed to the reductions of marxism understood as a hard determinism of the economic’.

Uses and abuses of cultural studies

Jim McGuigan (1992) claims that the real ‘crisis’ in cultural studies is that it has narrowed its focus to questions of consumption without situating such questions within the context of the material relations of production. To reverse the trend, he advocates a dialogue between cultural studies and the political economy of culture. He fears that for cultural studies to remain separate is for it to remain politically ineffective as a mode of explanation, and to risk becoming complicit with the prevailing forces of exploitation and oppression.2

McGuigan (ibid., 85) identifies Fiske’s work as ‘indicative of the critical decline of British cultural studies’. Now McGuigan may be right about Fiske, but this does not make him right about cultural studies. Put simply, Fiske is not cultural studies (and nor would he claim to be). Others, from within cultural studies, have made similar criticisms of Fiske’s work – for example, Jen Ang (Chapter 14), Martin Barker (1990), Martin Barker and Anne Beezer (1992), Lawrence Grossberg (1992) and Morris (Chapter 7). To establish Fiske as cultural studies requires their exclusion – it requires a reified and reduced field of study. David Harris’s (1992) critique of cultural studies operates in much the same way. For example, in his discussion of what he regards as the inadequacies of youth studies at the CCCS, he uses the contributions of Jenny Garber and McRobbie to highlight the gender-blindness of much of this early work. But he conveniently fails to acknowledge, for the telling moment of his critique, that both Garber and McRobbie make their criticisms not only from within cultural studies but also in one of the Birmingham Centre’s own publications. In other words, the fact that their argument (their work) is also cultural studies is bracketed out of the argument in order for it to function as a critique of cultural studies.
Whatever else cultural studies is, it is certainly not the monolithic unity conjured up by both McGuigian and Harris. As Green (Chapter 3) points out, 'cultural studies has been resolutely "impure"'. Frow and Morris (Chapter 22) also refer to the 'methodological impurity' of cultural studies. Hall (1992, 278) makes this very clear:

Cultural Studies has multiple discourses; it has a number of different histories. It is a whole set of formations; it has its own different conjunctures and moments in the past. It included many different kinds of work. I want to insist on that! It always was a set of unstable formations. It was 'centred' only in quotation marks. ... It had many trajectories; many people had and have different theoretical positions, all of them in contention. Theoretical work at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies was more appropriately called theoretical noise. It was accompanied by a great deal of bad feeling, argument, unstable anxieties, and angry silences.

For example, the centrality of class in cultural studies was disrupted first by feminism's insistence on the importance of gender, and then by black students raising questions about the invisibility of race in much cultural studies analysis. Women Take Issue (Women's Studies Group, 1978, 15) is a telling example: 'Our initial reason for wanting to produce the book was fundamental: the continued absence from CCCS of a visible concern with feminist issues.' The Empire Strikes Back (Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, 1982, 7) announces:

There are many reasons why the issues raised by the study of 'races' and racisms should be central to the concerns of cultural studies. Yet racist ideologies and racial conflicts have been ignored, both in historical writing and in accounts of the present. If nothing else, this book should be taken as a signal that this marginalization cannot continue.

Paul Gilroy (1987, 12) makes a similar point in There Ain't No Black In The Union Jack: 'The book ... related to its origins in cultural studies ... seeks to provide ... a corrective to the more ethnocentric dimensions of that discipline.'

Cultural studies has always been an unfolding discourse, responding to changing historical and political conditions and always marked by debate, disagreement and intervention. Now this does not mean that cultural studies is a completely open disciplinary field. One cannot simply rename as cultural studies what one already does in order to impress publishers or to salvage a declining area of academic work. Cultural studies does mean something.

There can be no doubt that cultural studies has been experiencing great success recently. While success is to be welcomed, there are suspicions that it might not be all that it seems. Nelson et al. (1992, 10–11), for example, claim that 'Too many people simply rename what they were already doing to take advantage of the cultural studies boom'. Grossberg (1992, 404) makes a similar point: 'Many of those now describing their work as cultural studies were attacking cultural studies only a few years ago although they have not changed their project in the interim. Many of those who now appropriate the term want to read only very selectively in the tradition.'
**Hegemony theory revisited**

McRobbie's (1994) response to the so-called 'crisis' in cultural studies is to argue for a return to neo-Gramscian hegemony theory. McRobbie argues that cultural studies has been radically transformed as debates about postmodernism and postmodernity have replaced the more familiar debates about ideology and hegemony. Cultural studies, she claims, has responded in two ways. On the one hand, it has prompted a return to economic reductive forms of analysis; and on the other, it has given rise to an uncritical celebration of consumerism, in which consumption is understood too exclusively in terms of pleasure and meaning-making. McRobbie argues for a return to the concept of 'reproduction' to enable consumption to be seen in its broader context of political and social relations. She rejects a return 'to a crude and mechanical base-superstructure model, and also the dangers of pursuing a kind of cultural populism to a point at which anything which is consumed and is popular is also seen as oppositional' (ibid., 39). Instead, she calls for 'an extension of Gramscian cultural analysis' (ibid.) and for a return to ethnographic cultural analysis which takes as its object of study '[t]he lived experience which breathes life into [the] . . . inanimate objects [of popular culture]' (ibid., 27). Such work would be situated in a context of reproduction.

Ang (Chapter 14) also calls for 'a return to the problematic of hegemony':

To avoid the 'banality' in cultural studies that Morris [Chapter 7] points to . . . the ethnographic perspective on audiences needs to be placed in a broader theoretical framework, so that it ceases to be just a sophisticated empirical audience research, but becomes part of a more encompassing understanding, both structural and historical, of our contemporary cultural condition.

Neo-Gramscian hegemony theory at its best insists that there is a dialectic between the processes of production and the activities of consumption. The consumer always confronts a text or practice in its material existence as a result of determinate conditions of production. But in the same way, the text or practice is confronted by a consumer who in effect *produces in use* the range of possible meaning(s) – these cannot just be read off from the materiality of the text or practice, or the means or relations of its production.

Cultural studies would also insist that making popular culture ('production in use') can be empowering to subordinate and resistant to dominant understandings of the world. But this is not to say that popular culture is always empowering and resistant. To deny the passivity of consumption is not to deny that sometimes consumption is passive; to deny that the consumers of popular culture are not cultural dupes is not to deny that the culture industries seek to manipulate. But it is to deny that popular culture is little more than a degraded landscape of commercial and ideologico-cultural manipulation, successfully imposed from above, to make profit and secure social control. The best of cultural studies insists that to decide these matters requires vigilance and attention to the details of the production, distribution and consumption of culture. These are not matters that can be decided once and for all (outside the contingencies of history and politics) with an elitist glance and a condescending sneer. Nor can they
be read off from the moment of production (locating meaning, pleasure, ideological effect, etc., in, variously, the intention, the means of production or the production itself): these are only aspects of the contexts for ‘production in use’, and it is, ultimately, in ‘production in use’ that questions of meaning, pleasure, ideological effect, etc., can be (contingently) decided. Moreover, it is important to distinguish between the power of the culture industries and the power of their influence. Too often the two are conflated, but they are not necessarily the same. The trouble with the political economy approach is that too often it is assumed that they are the same.

While it is clearly important to locate the texts and practices of popular culture within the field of their economic determinations, it is clearly insufficient to do this and think you have also analysed important questions of audience appropriation and use. As Hall (Chapter 2) points out, the problem with the political economy of culture approach is that ‘It tends to conceive the economic level as not only a “necessary” but a “sufficient” explanation of cultural and ideological effects’.

There are different ways of thinking, different ways of using what Hall calls ‘the enormously productive metaphor of hegemony’ (1992, 280). Hegemony theory in cultural studies operates not always quite as formulated by Gramsci. The concept has been expanded and elaborated to take into account other areas of struggle. Whereas for Gramsci the concept is used to explain and explore relations of power articulated in terms of class, recent formulations in cultural studies have extended the concept to include, for example, gender, race, meaning and pleasure. What has remained constant (or relatively constant under the impact of political and theoretical change, from the left-Leavisism of Richard Hoggart to the postmodernism of, for example, McRobbie, Fiske and Grossberg) is a particular guiding principle of cultural analysis. It is first found in what Green (Chapter 3) quite rightly calls ‘Hoggart’s remarkably enduring formulation’: ‘Against this background may be seen how much the more generally diffused appeals of the mass publications connect with commonly accepted attitudes, how they are altering those attitudes and how they are meeting resistance’ (my italics, Hoggart, 1957, 19). In the 1960s it is given a culturalist accent by Hall and Whannel: ‘Teenage culture is a contradictory mixture of the authentic and the manufactured: it is an area of self-expression for the young and a lush grazing pasture for the commercial providers’ (my italics, 1964, 276). In the 1970s it is found in the Gramscian tones of John Clarke et al.: ‘Men and women are . . . formed, and form themselves through society, culture and history. So the existing cultural patterns form a sort of historical reservoir – a pre-constituted “field of possibilities” – which groups take up, transform, develop. Each group makes something of its starting conditions – and through this “making”, through this practice, culture is reproduced and transmitted’ (my italics, 1976, 11). In the 1980s we hear it in the Foucauldian analysis of Mica Nava: ‘Consumerism is far more than just economic activity: it is also about dream and consolation, communication and confrontation, image and identity. . . . Consumerism is a discourse through which disciplinary power is both exercised and contested’ (my italics, 1987, 209–10). In the 1990s it is located by Angela McRobbie in the ‘new times’ of postmodernism: ‘Finally
we need a mode of analysis which is connective and integrative and which tracks the social and ideological relations which prevail at every level between cultural production and consumption ... from where it is socially constructed to where it is socially deconstructed and contested, in the institutions, practices and relationships of everyday life' (my italics, 1994, 41). In every decade in the history of cultural studies, the point has been made and repeated. It is the 'Gramscian insistence' (before, with and after Gramsci), learnt from Marx, that we make culture and we are made by culture; there is agency and there is structure. It is not enough to celebrate agency; nor is it enough to detail the structure(s) of power – we must always keep in mind the dialectical play between resistance and incorporation. The best of cultural studies has always been mindful of this.

Where is cultural studies?

Things have certainly changed a great deal since the early days of cultural studies. Hall (Chapter 21) remembers: 'When I first went to the University of Birmingham in 1964 to help Professor Richard Hoggart found the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, no such thing as cultural studies yet existed... Today cultural studies programs exist everywhere, especially in the United States.'

During the course of the last 15–20 years, the location of cultural studies has shifted from Britain to Australia, the USA and beyond.3 The internationalization of cultural studies can be easily demonstrated by an examination of the editorial board of the journal, Cultural Studies. Of its 47 members, 19 are from the USA, nine from Australia, nine from the UK, five from Canada, two from Italy, and one each from Germany, Finland and Taiwan.4

Morris (Chapter 7) tells us that 'cultural studies in Australia has been for some time in the state that the Japanese call a boom'. What she means by this is not just that cultural studies is developing quickly in Australia but 'that the marketing of cultural studies is beginning to define and restrict what it is possible to do and say in its name'. Graeme Turner (Chapter 20) makes a similar point:

In Australia ... the influence of British cultural studies has been profound. Most of us are aware that, as it establishes itself ever more securely within the academy, and as it becomes increasingly comfortable in its relations with the disciplines it originally interrogated, British cultural studies is in danger of becoming a pedagogic rather than a critical or political enterprise.

Hall (1992, 285) also speaks of danger. It is the USA rather than Australia which is his concern. His focus is what he calls

the enormous explosion of cultural studies in the US, its rapid professionalization and institutionalization, is not a moment which any of us who tried to set up a marginalized Centre in a university like Birmingham could, in any simple way, regret. And yet I have to say, in the strongest sense, that it reminds me of the ways in which, in Britain, we are always aware of institutionalization as a moment of profound danger.
What concerns Hall is that the institutionalization of cultural studies in America will follow the same pattern as the institutionalization of French deconstruction; it will 'formalize out of existence the critical questions of power, history, and politics' by reducing them to 'exclusively matters of language and textuality' (ibid., 286). But Hall does not advocate the cultural studies equivalent of a 'back to basics' policy (in this instance, a return to British origins). As he explains, 'It has nothing to do with [American] cultural studies making itself more like British cultural studies, which is I think, an entirely false and empty cause to try to propound' (ibid.).

O'Connor's (Chapter 10) worry is slightly different. He contends that in the USA cultural studies is in danger of becoming 'synonymous with various types of postmodern theorizing'. But worse still, 'Cultural studies in the United States is being sponsored by scholars who rarely have any connection to existing political and cultural movements and are somewhat surprised that this might even be possible'. Nelson (Chapter 16) is concerned that 'Of all the intellectual movements that have swept the humanities in America since the seventies, none will be taken up so shallowly, so opportunistically, so unreflectively, and so ahistorically as cultural studies'. In a Gramscian move ('pessimism of the intellect, optimism of the will'), Nelson, on the one hand, wishes to encourage other academics to help 'make American institutions nervous about cultural studies' while, on the other, remaining resigned to the fact that 'The depoliticizing of cultural studies will no doubt pay off, making it more palatable at once to granting agencies and to conservative colleagues, administrators, and politicians, but only at the cost of blocking cultural studies from having any critical purchase on this nation's social life'.

Elizabeth Long (Chapter 11) argues for the need to prevent the marginalization of British feminist cultural studies (an 'exclusion' she already detects taking place) as it is this tradition that has 'the best chance of maintaining a critical stance in its appropriation by feminist scholars in America, both because of their connections with a broad social movement and because of the nature of their practices within the academy'. For these reasons 'feminism is central for developing the critical potential of cultural studies'. Ellen Rooney (Chapter 12) makes much the same argument, pointing to the fact that the absence of a political constituency outside the university (unlike, say, women's studies or African-American studies) makes cultural studies 'peculiarly vulnerable to political neutralization within the university'.

Manthia Diawara (Chapter 18) focuses on the way African-American studies should respond to the import of cultural studies. He distinguishes between two traditions in British cultural studies, the Birmingham School (CCCS) and what he calls the 'Black British School', consisting of London-based black artists and writers. In the USA, African-American studies must embrace both schools, not in order to replicate what they have already done but to make a cultural studies grounded in the material conditions of American life, to produce what he calls 'performance studies', 'the study of ways in which black people, through communicative action, created and continue to create themselves within the American experience'.

Finally, it seems appropriate to close with Hall's demand (Chapter 21) for
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deeper commitment within cultural studies (regardless of its geographic location) to the analysis of racism:

the work that cultural studies has to do is to mobilize everything that it can find in terms of intellectual resources in order to understand what keeps making the lives we live, and the societies we live in, profoundly and deeply antihumane in their capacity to live with difference. Cultural Studies' message is a message for academics and intellectuals but, fortunately, for many other people as well. In that sense, I have tried to hold together in my own intellectual life, on the one hand, the conviction and passion and the devotion to objective interpretation, to analysis, to rigorous analysis and understanding, to the passion to find out, and to the production of knowledge that we did not know before. But, on the other, I am convinced that no intellectual worth his or her salt, and no university that wants to hold up its head in the face of the twenty-first century, can afford to turn dispassionate eyes away from the problems of race and ethnicity that beset our world.

It is not possible to be in cultural studies and to not agree with Hall's claim on the future of cultural studies.

Notes

1. For another version of this history, with particular reference to popular culture, see Storey (1993) and Storey (1994).
2. For an informed and polemical debate between cultural studies and the political economy of culture, see Critical Studies in Mass Communication 12 (1995).
3. See Bill Schwarz's essay, 'Where is cultural studies?' (1994). The essay has a double focus: on the one hand, it poses the question in the sense that cultural studies has gone missing and, on the other, in terms of the new geographic locations of cultural studies.
4. The readings collected here are divided among Australia (Chapters 7, 14, 19, 20 and 22), Britain (Chapters 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 15 and 21) and the USA (Chapters 4, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12, 16, 17 and 18).