

Introduction

A new *Endeavour*?

Cultural Studies as an object of study

Somewhere buried in the endless British TV cop show *The Bill* is a bit of dialogue where a detective speculates on his possible future outside of the police force. I can't remember why; perhaps he'd been a naughty boy. In answer to a polite inquiry about what he planned to do next, he mused for a moment, then came up with the most ridiculous scenario he could think of. Evidently the scriptwriters wanted something so unlikely that viewers would realise that the character saw no future for himself other than as a policeman. 'Oh I dunno,' he says, deadpan, 'maybe I'll go to college and do a degree in cultural studies.' Laughter all round.

Cultural studies has come of age; it has achieved sufficiently wide popular recognition to become a butt of jokes in the media, and denunciation in the daily press. But its demonisation as the latest successor of poststructuralism, postmodernism and political correctness suggests that it has touched a nerve somewhere in the body politic. As a field of academic, intellectual and activist inquiry, analysis and criticism, it's not the sort of thing you'd normally expect to crop up on *The Bill*.

Even within intellectual communities and academic institutions, there is little agreement about what counts as cultural studies, either as a critical practice or as an institutional apparatus. On the contrary, the field is riven by fundamental disagreements about what cultural studies is for, in whose interests it is done, what theories, methods and objects of study are proper to it, and where to set its limits.

Cultural studies is attacked by some because (they say) it has abandoned belief in the real and commitment to the truth. But others worry that it is all too directly connected with contemporary realities. As a field (they say) that celebrates the popular, it is too close to the agenda of corporate capitalist expansionism to achieve critical distance. In fact cultural studies has been criticised from all sides over a number of issues:

- Some say that it is too political. Others that it is not political enough.
- It has no method. It has no object of study. It has no discipline. Or – it is too institutionalised academically.

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- It belongs in low-prestige teaching colleges, not high-end research universities. Or – it can only be practised by researchers who already know about the politics of knowledge in an established discipline.
- It's undergraduate consciousness-raising. Or – it's the name given to the latest enthusiasm of senior writers in half a dozen different fields.
- It is too English. Or too American.
- Too academic; not activist enough. Or – too activist; not scholarly enough.
- It celebrates when it should criticise. Or – it criticises when it should undertake policy research for external clients.

At stake in such debates are important questions about the power of intellectual work in society and in the development of public policy. Can thinking, analysing and criticising stuff, change the world? If not, why would anyone, a retired detective say, want to bother with it? And should intellectual horsepower be applied to banal activities, leisure pursuits, fun and games, everyday life? If so, further questions ensue about the politics of developing a contentious field with an unworthy object of study that is also an examinable academic subject, expanding at a rapid rate around the world. There are even questions about the nature of the real, which continues to baffle philosophers and scientists, even though it comes over as pretty obvious on a week-to-week basis to your bluff, blokeish, no-nonsense cockney detective (so obvious, in fact, that it is as well to remember that it's the *detective* who's unreal here).

Cultural studies can't supply definitive answers to the intellectual, cultural and philosophical questions of the day, but it has proven a lively field of debate and dialogue. People from many different academic backgrounds, political persuasions and philosophical speaking positions have tried to address them in such a way that practical strategies and ways of acting in the world – whether that's the academic or the real world – can be improvised and implemented, as well as theorised and thought through.

Because of its position as a crossroads or bazaar for the exchange of ideas from many directions, cultural studies has been at one and the same time a motley confusion of difference, and an ambitious intellectual enterprise, seeking nothing less than to rethink received truths and remake inherited frameworks of explanation. On the ground of difference, debate and disagreement, it has sought to build a new consciousness.

Cultural studies is itself a symptom – not least in having such an ambition – of widespread doubt and disillusion about the continuing ability of inherited truths to command assent. The wonderful promises of the *modern* era – progress, science, truth, reason, plenty, comfort, security – looked very battered indeed in the years after the Second World War. Holocaust, Cold War, Mutually Assured Destruction, police states, Stalinism, Vietnam: no one was innocent, nothing was plain and simple, fear and desire infested reason and truth, progress created its own terrorists. Cultural studies was a symptom of the urgent and profound need to think seriously and in a sustained way about such matters, and how

they connected with unprecedented personal freedoms and affluence at least in the developed world, new opportunities in education and cultural expression, and expanded horizons of experience for young people, women, gays and lesbians, people of colour, and many other social groups and identities.

How to teach a new generation of students to engage ethically with their own culture, *without* relying on the discredited master narratives of nationalism, racial supremacy, patriarchy or imperialism? The question was sharpened by the fact that the students themselves were also largely a new phenomenon, certainly in Britain and Australia, where higher education until the 1960s remained very much a minority pursuit. Students then were preparing for officer-class jobs in the professions like the law, the military, the Church or medicine, or functionary positions in the industrial landscape of applied science, business and management, and government administration. The idea that intellectual emancipation should be extended to the poor, to women, to *everyone*, was novel and threatening.

Education, knowledge, ideas, critique, were all thought to be *scarce* – you simply couldn't share them out too widely, on the grounds that more means worse. This was the 'if everyone has an MA then nobody does' school of thought. It wanted to *ration* education, culture and power. Cultural studies was in part a symptom of the effort to oppose such arguments and to democratise higher education as well as the cultural domain itself.

Cultural studies was from the very beginning interested in knowledge and ideas and culture as part of what Michel Foucault later called the 'plenitude of the possible' (Foucault, 1984: 267). Culture, knowledge, theory, ideas and – after Foucault – power itself, were not scarce at all, but *plentiful*, and part of the project of cultural studies was to study and practise not just the traditional aesthetics and pursuits of the governors, but to include in and as culture as much as possible, indeed everything – the 'whole way of life' of a people (as Raymond Williams put it). Cultural studies was a philosophy of plenty, of inclusion, and of renewal.

It was a bit 1960s in this – it had some of the self-delusion of flower power, thinking that its own goodwill was freedom for others; that mind expansion and the intense experience of the self *were* political liberation; that music, sex, lifestyle, desire and consumption were *more* important than politics, war, jobs and GDP.

This ambition for inclusiveness extended to culture itself, of course. The philosophy of plenty rejected the idea that culture should remain confined to the horizons inherited from philosophies of scarcity that reduced culture to a zero-sum game, where someone's gain was another's loss. Modernism was one such philosophy. Marx and Engels themselves, most influential of the modernist philosophers of power and history, had declared that works of wonder for the rich entailed prostitution and poverty for the poor. But what if they didn't? What if culture wasn't a scarce resource at all, but plentiful and abundant, suffusing every nook and cranny of everyone's life? Cultural studies set about finding culture in places where it was hitherto unlooked for. In the context of the

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time this meant looking for it in demographic locations other than those of the rich. So working-class culture, women's culture, youth culture, gay and lesbian culture, postcolonial culture, third world culture, and the culture of everyday life were all quickly discovered and described.

But there was no established method or discipline, no corpus of work, no precedent or provenance, for the study of the culture of what a philosophy of scarcity could only identify as the dispossessed. If industrial workers, women, the poor, young people, third world and colonised people were dispossessed, it necessarily seemed to follow that they didn't have any culture, because they didn't have any power. But this was clearly nonsense. Culture was evident everywhere, from Samoa to the San Fernando Valley, even to Sun Hill (fictional South London location of *The Bill*).

As a philosophy of plenty, cultural studies also sought to address its own constituency. It did not want to be confined to dealing with ideas and phenomena only. It wanted to take seriously the culture(s) of those it taught, and talk about them as part of its project of inclusion and renewal. Increasingly folk from right across the spectrum of difference would turn up in class, enrolled on Cultural Studies 101, wondering, it was to be hoped, what was going on. What now?

The only tools to hand belonged to anthropology, literary criticism, political economy and other existing disciplines. These were themselves based on philosophies of scarcity. They were devoted to the study of *other* peoples, *great* literature, *powerful* economies. They were not dedicated to inclusiveness, nor to the emancipation or empowerment of those who studied them (not directly as part of their own method). But cultural studies did harbour this desire. It wanted to be an agent of social and political change, and for its own student-readers to be part of that process, armed with a self-reflexive understanding of how their culture connected with others, and with existing arrangements of power and privilege. As a philosophy of plenty, cultural studies introduced into the academy the novel idea that you might not have to choose between high and low culture, or even between the rich and the dispossessed, but instead you needed to find out what connected, drove, and separated these differences. 'More' meant not 'worse', as in the slogan, but something both simpler and harder to analyse. More meant . . . more.

Once that line of investigation was embarked upon, not least as a dialogue between teachers and students, authors and readers, it did begin to seem to have both *implications* and *applications*.

The *implications* for the literary and artistic imagination were that the philosophy of plenty soon overwhelmed the canon of great works of literature, opera, music and art. The philosophy of plenty exposed this regime as a restrictive practice, designed to preserve scarcity and therefore value (price) in a market not only of works like paintings, but also of repute, symbolic power and representativeness (cultural capital). Indeed, so firmly did this implication take hold in the collective unconscious of cultural studies that eventually one of its own senior practitioners was provoked into protest:

As an Afro-Caribbean student of mine said, referring to the whole sweep of modern art, 'We were not taught about this at school. Why have we been excluded?' . . . The exclusive insistence on mass culture as the only form relevant to the masses implies . . . that the mass audience is incapable of understanding high art. (Wilson, 2001: 11).

Elizabeth Wilson was right to scold cultural studies. Confining the masses to mass culture was not a generous act of inclusion, but tended to perpetuate 'the very racism and elitism that such well-meaning gestures aim to eliminate'. Cultural studies needed to remain a philosophy of plenty. Folk needed to learn what they didn't know, as much as they needed to affirm in knowledge their own identity, subjectivity and culture. The *implication* of cultural studies for the literary and artistic imagination is therefore to focus on the expansion of difference, not on vanquishing outmoded cultural forms.

Its *application* to the field of political economy required that attention be paid to consumption and usage as well as to production, profit and power. Bringing consumers into the conversation – including directly, in the form of students and readers – was itself a novel extension of established practice. But the implications of taking seriously the agency and culture of consumers would eventually have profound consequences on the mode of production itself. In an economy of scarcity, consumers are in a sort of adversarial relation with producers – they're a somewhat dehumanised mass market whose behaviour has to be manipulated and modified by aggressively competitive corporations who are out in the end to take power *over* consumers. But in an economy of plenty, consumers are partners, clients, occasionally suppliers and competitors. They have a determining influence on new products and directions. They're part of the force and energy of productive development, not its passive victims. Their culture and taste will determine the success or otherwise of new products.

What happened in practice to this philosophy that wanted to explore the 'plenitude of the possible' is the subject of this book. Some of the people whose work, ideas or views are discussed here would not self-identify as proponents or exponents of cultural studies: opponents, maybe. However, in a lively and argumentative field with a post-disciplinary reach and cross-over tendencies, many voices have contributed to the enterprise, and some of those voices have certainly been poached from neighbouring bands.

Endeavour replica?

The present short history of cultural studies, done by one who has served before the mast since the late 1970s, cannot therefore claim to be exploring *terra incognita*. This book is not *Voyage of the Beagle*, more *Endeavour Replica*. It seeks to ply modestly and in many directions up and down the coast of cultural studies, charting how things connected, and where they didn't, and showing newcomers the ropes as it goes along. But it doesn't forget that modest colliers can have ambitious

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purposes, can wander far afield, and can be present at the discovery of wonders. That truth is forever encapsulated in the name of the *Endeavour* – not a starship or space shuttle, but the little wooden Whitby collier that was converted to serve as Captain Cook’s vessel for the voyage in which he discovered (for modern Western culture), among other wonders, Australia. It’s also the name of the modern replica of that ship, built in Fremantle of local jarrah and karri, initially bankrolled by disgraced media, brewing and property tycoon Alan Bond, a ship that is both seriously real and not real at all, a globetrotting simulacrum that purports to be what it analyses, and takes paying guests for rigorously authentic and not very comfortable cruises. Sometimes these guests are accompanied – not to say goaded – by media crews, who film them suffering the reality of life aboard an extinct species of vessel in the latest of media sports and reality TV: ‘extreme history.’ Such a series was filmed by the BBC on the *Endeavour* itself in 2001, with, among others, historian Ian MacCalman (president of the Australian Academy of the Humanities) on board. The (media) crew ensured that conditions were as trying as possible. His discomfort as a person was duly contrasted with his status as historian of the period in which the original *Endeavour* sailed. Apparently the message to the viewing public was that those interested in the past should beware, or at least should experience what it felt like at the time.

Well, this new *endeavour* seeks to explore the strange and fascinating landscape of cultural studies, as unsentimentally as possible. Like Australia, it may seem low, featureless and unprepossessing to the newcomer, but also like Australia, its history is one way of thinking about the adventure – for good and ill – of the modern. Like the replica *Endeavour*, it may occasionally be difficult to determine whether what you’re looking at is real or constructed, original or replay, substance or style, reality or reality TV. But that’s cultural studies. Astute reading is its number one skill.

Despite my involvement in cultural studies as a participant observer (during which time I’ve experienced a fair amount of cold water, often poured by those who sought to test my ideas thoroughly in public), the book is not offered as a personal position, nor does it seek to argue towards positions with which I agree. I’ve tried to be a reliable witness as a historian. The treatment of cultural studies presented in the ensuing chapters if anything underplays its author’s preferences, predilections and prejudices (though occasional prating may be encountered, and easily skipped). Chief among my own passions have been the media – television, the press and popular (fashion/style) magazines in particular – on which topic I have authored or co-authored quite a few books and not a few articles, starting in the 1970s. The books include

- *Reading Television,*
- *Understanding News,*
- *Making Sense of the Media,*
- *Tele-ology,*
- *The Politics of Pictures,*

- *Popular Reality,*
- *Uses of Television,*
- *American Cultural Studies: A Reader,*
- *The Indigenous Public Sphere,*
- *Communication, Cultural and Media Studies: The Key Concepts.*

Many of them are still in print (as I write), so interested readers may refer to them directly for coverage of those media from a cultural studies perspective.

And while, in those books, I have developed a specialist interest in textual analysis as opposed to a political economy approach, the present book does not seek to reproduce that imbalance, which is a product of my training and expertise, not a desire to promote one approach at the expense of others (my own academic training was in literary not economic studies). So much so that there's no chapter devoted specifically to textual analysis in the present book, but there is one on the connection between culture and economy (Chapter 4). At the end of that chapter I describe what could be a new manifesto for cultural studies, but it is not one of my own making – it arises from a policy document published by a British government department. Other interests of mine receive scant attention here: e.g. journalism studies and history, especially non-news journalism; the creation of modern popular readerships; media literacy and citizenship; suburbia; media history, especially that of popular content in the photo-press and visual media; girls in news and fashion media; radio and democracy; the fashion/art interface; Indigenous media; creative industries policy and industry research. The fact is, in relating this history I've been guided by the field, rather than by my own position in it.

However, there are still gaps. Some important topics within cultural studies are all too briefly or glancingly dealt with. Chief among these are its internationalisation beyond the triple-A axis of the Anglo-American-Australian region. Cultural studies has begun to burgeon in China, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore; in South Africa; Latin America; South East Asia; and Scandinavia. Occasional interested glances even come out of Germany (e.g. from Ruhr-Universität Bochum), though of course France remains convinced of the adequacy of its own versions of these matters. I've done my own bit to encourage the internationalising process as Editor of the *International Journal of Cultural Studies*. This is not only because I am an economic migrant – in fact I'm a serial emigrant, having moved, *en famille*, successively from England to Wales, Wales to Australia, and back, and back again (to date). More to the point, the multinational uptake and appropriation of new intellectual currents indicates a new and exciting set of concerns, and new voices too, for cultural studies. This book underplays these developments, along with work coming out of the postcolonial studies area, for instance that of Paul Gilroy, Ien Ang, Dipesh Chakrabarty (subaltern studies), Homi Bhabha, and others. As they begin to bed down into established patterns, such omissions ought to be rectified in later editions.

8 *A Short History of Cultural Studies***A genealogy of cultural studies**

The main body of *A Short History of Cultural Studies* is written in the past tense, precisely because the field has reached the point of having a history. It is not located in the endless present tense of disciplinary methods or universal truth. And each chapter sets off in pursuit of a *different* cultural studies; six of them in all. Given the peculiarities of cultural studies it would be unwise to impose upon it the false unity of a linear history.

The object of study in cultural studies changed over time and took different forms depending on who was investigating it and why. This was not only a matter of deciding what was meant by culture in general and in specific instances, but also a question of the analytical agenda – which shifted from class to gender and then to ethnicity and postcolonial matters, for instance. Nevertheless, some continuities and patterns did emerge. Cultural studies was of necessity an interdisciplinary field of inquiry. It drew widely from the humanities and social sciences, from anthropology, textual theory, social and political theory and media studies, with some contributions from history, geography, the visual and performative arts. Psychology tended to figure more as an opponent and a symptom than as a useful framework of explanation.

Cultural studies was committed to self-reflexivity in its mode of intellectual production, denying innocence or transparency to its own practices. It specialised in margins and boundaries, both discursive and social, and that included its own intellectual and academic status, methods and corpus. Self-reflexivity extended to a perennial reluctance to accept disciplinary authority of any kind. No orthodoxy was allowed uncontested. Nothing about cultural studies got away with being standardised, including the:

- **definition** of culture;
- **scope** of cultural studies as a field of inquiry;
- **methods** appropriate to that task;
- **history** of cultural studies itself.

This book too seeks to show what discussions were afoot in relation to these issues, not to produce a definitive text.

Cultural studies wasn't interested in definitive texts, least of all about itself. A rhetoric of disavowal grew up around the genre of writing associated with the history of cultural studies. Even as they told the story, authors proclaimed that the usual history (Hoggart, Hall, Williams) was itself a bit of a myth. They described and simultaneously decentred the crucial position of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham in England. They complained about the Anglo-American-Australian Anglophone bias of cultural studies, but quoted mainly from such sources. This strange behaviour was not very helpful for students who wanted to know what was what and when, but it was inevitable, because cultural studies was a critical not a disciplinary enterprise.

Any orthodoxy, *especially* in its own practices, was suspect. Perhaps this explains why cultural studies is relatively well endowed with histories of itself, and why publishers remain interested in commissioning more, including this one. Neighbouring fields, such as media and communication studies, for instance, seemed less anxious about their provenance.

Despite anxieties about itself, cultural studies drew strength from this radical refusal to naturalise the hegemonic positions within its own practice, even though it necessarily established a hierarchy of concerns, personalities and publications in the very act of returning constantly to them. By refusing disciplinary orthodoxy, cultural studies kept the door open to innovation from the margins, in line with its longstanding interest in difference and marginality. This also helped to preserve the idea that cultural studies was not wholly academic, certainly in its longer term aims. It was committed to engagement in cultural politics, not only to establishing an object of study and a disciplinary method.

Another strength was that, as part of cultural criticism more widely, cultural studies had gone into the analytical world armed with various rhetorical ploys that were designed to reveal or disrupt the speaking position of the analyst. No concession was made to universalism in its own enunciation: there was no authoritative position from which it could survey, order and evaluate its own or anyone else's being. Its published form was always 'adorned with the props of the argument's staging,' as Homi Bhabha put it (Bhabha, 1998: 29).

But there was a down side to this indeterminacy, both intellectual and practical. Intellectually, cultural studies was so hybrid that it was hard to tell what it was and where it ended. Anyone could join in, and many did, resulting in discomfort for those whose sense of what was necessary didn't coincide with the interests of others. But because of its refusal to professionalise its disciplinary form, cultural studies had no institutional means to deal with bad practice, bad faith, or bad politics done in its name.

And – hence – cultural studies was slow to set up a practical machinery for the conduct of its affairs and the promotion of its objectives. An attempt by Pertti Alasuutari, Joke Hermes, Ann Gray (and myself) to set up an International Association of Cultural Studies demonstrated how difficult it was to agree anything. A determined critique of the whole idea was led by Larry Grossberg, for whom the spectre of academic associations on the American model loomed large. He didn't want cultural studies to develop big hegemonic organisations like the ICA, APA or MLA. The debate rumbled on for several years and across several continents over email and at the biannual Crossroads in Cultural Studies conferences at Tampere and Birmingham. For some it was simply a matter of networking and perhaps getting discounts on journals; for others this was subjugating the field to dominant institutions and commercial publishers. For some it was a chance to organise interventions in public debate; for others it reeked of careerism and opportunism. For some it was a good way to inform folk

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from other countries what was happening elsewhere; for others it was another Euro-American (and Australian) take-over. It was hedged about with *must be* rather than *can do* rhetoric, so it floundered where it might have flourished, and had to wait several years before it was finally launched in modified form at the 2002 Crossroads conference at Tampere. Even then, its structure was more ideologically representative than practically useful, skewing regional representation towards what some thought the international map ought to look like, as opposed to following the contours of cultural studies' actual strength in different regions, thereby over-representing Latin America, for instance, and under-representing Australasia, where cultural studies was well established.

But there were institutional gains. In the UK cultural studies achieved visibility in one of the RAE (Research Assessment Exercise) panels that determined research strength in all UK universities in assessment exercises in 1992, 1996 and 2001. Panel 65, chaired by Philip Schlesinger, was devoted to Communication and Cultural Studies, although many senior figures in the field, including some people serving as assessors on that panel, returned their own research to a different one (usually Sociology). In Australia, the Creative Arts and Humanities panel of the ARC (Australian Research Council) explicitly recognised cultural studies, and a senior figure, Graeme Turner, made it to the panel that also covered traditional disciplines in the arts, humanities and creative arts. The Australian Academy of the Humanities (AAH), installed a cultural studies section in 1995, which elected two or three new Fellows annually to that nation's peak 'learned academy.'

What was cultural studies?

It was a **philosophy of plenty**. It was:

- Dedicated to the study of the **expansion of difference** in human affairs (during an era of increasing globalisation, corporate concentration and technological integration of those affairs);
- An assemblage of **intellectual** concerns about power, meaning, identity and subjectivity in modern societies;
- An attempt to recover and promote **marginal**, unworthy or despised regions, identities, practices and media (it was a profane pursuit);
- A **critical** enterprise devoted to displacing, decentering, demystifying and deconstructing the common sense of dominant discourses;
- An activist commitment to **intellectual politics** – making a difference with ideas, to ideas, by ideas.

It was also a **publishing** enterprise, partly defined by cultural entrepreneurs in both the academy and the publishing industry. Cultural studies was what its practitioners and publishers said it was.

Cultural studies showed a marked tendency to concentrate on the relations between addresser and addressee in modernity. It produced nuanced and interesting work on the practices of sense-making in various textual and social contexts, especially the inequalities of those relations, the media they were conducted through, and the possibility of changes to them. There was a steady interest in popular culture, class (sub)cultures, popular media (drama, journalism, music), everyday life, cities and suburbs, subjectivity, ideology, hegemony, discourse, power, visibility (and other non-speech semiosis), the body, the body and technology, the relations between public and private and between institutional and personal, the politics of culture, the circumstances of marginal people and practices, transnational knowledge and image flows, colonial and imperial residue among non-metropolitan cultures, for instance.

The study of cultural studies itself has a history. Early in the field were some of the founding practitioners. Richard Hoggart (cultural studies as the democratised literary imagination) and Stuart Hall (cultural studies as the political theory of popular resistance and change) both wrote about it, as did Hall's successor at Birmingham, the historian Richard Johnson (cultural studies as bemused materialism). The first book-length history of (British) cultural studies was written by (Australian) Graeme Turner; a careful working through of theories and theorists, books and arguments, concepts and controversies (Turner, 1990; 2nd edn 1996; 3rd edn 2002). It's still the best treatment of the topic. Many introductory books about cultural studies – by, say, John Storey (1999), Nick Couldry (2000), Chris Barker (2000) – incorporated historical accounts into their exposition of methodology and their analytical and conceptual exegesis. Senior figures of cultural studies – say, Charlotte Brunsdon, Paul Gilroy, Elizabeth Wilson, Angela McRobbie, David Morley – included historical accounts in their own unfolding *oeuvres*. Critics who marched to the beat of a different drum, but still called the tune cultural studies, such as Fred Inglis and Ioan Davies, did it their way. Because cultural studies was something of a come all ye festival, and one to which many did indeed turn up, both students and teachers, there was no shortage of storytelling going on all around. There were always different ways of telling the tales, and many voices were needed to do them justice.

Kindness and unknowing: Caveat lector

Winston Churchill was reputed to have quipped that 'history will be kind to us: I intend to write it'. Whether he said it or not, there was truth in the remark. Those who have participated in various events, great or small, political or intellectual, have a vested interest in two opposing aims: they want history to come across as accurate (i.e. to appear as history, not propaganda or self-aggrandisement), and they want it to be kind.

There's clearly scope here for an author to succumb to the temptation of

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cooking the books; laying out the relevant facts in such a way that a reader may imagine that the world belongs to the winners as a natural outcome of those facts. This risk is especially strong in the case of histories told by participants in the events described. So – *caveat lector*.

But participants are not in full possession of knowledge about themselves, and cannot know what information may prove relevant. So there's another view of lived history, this one propounded not for political gain by a national war leader, but by Raymond Williams, at the end of *Culture and Society*:

A culture, while it is being lived, is always in part unknown, in part unrealised. The making of a community is always an exploration, for consciousness cannot precede creation, and there is no formula for unknown experience. A good community, a living culture, will, because of this, not only make room for but actively encourage all and any who can contribute to the advance in consciousness which is the common need . . . ; for we do not know the future, we may never be certain of what may enrich it. (Williams, 1961: 334)

Terry Eagleton made the same point about intercultural communication. 'Every culture,' he wrote, 'has an internal blindspot where it fails to grasp or be at one with itself, and to discern this . . . is to understand that culture more fully (Eagleton, 2000: 96). From that insight (which he attributed to Slavoj Žižek), Eagleton suggested that analysis of other cultures, or 'the Other', can be useful not only to the analysis but also to the culture in question:

It is at the point where the Other is dislocated in itself, not wholly bound by its context, that we can encounter it most deeply, since this self-opaqueness is also true of ourselves. I understand the Other when I become aware that what troubles me about it, its enigmatic nature, is a problem for it too. (Eagleton, 2000: 96)

In short, participant analysts ought to be open to their own self-ignorance, and to the unknown parts of both their own and other cultures. Readers for their part ought to beware of seductive narratives taking the form of relevant facts.

One of the facts about the history of ideas is that ideas rarely have a birth, life and death in the way that biological organisms do. Ideas don't have a single origin – they aren't worthy of the name unless they're widely shared, used, revamped, re-versioned and revised. As Yuri Lotman has written, 'the individual human intellect does not have a monopoly in the work of thinking.' Intellectual operations are also carried out by 'semiotic systems', and by social institutions and agencies, which 'preserve, rework, and increase the store of information' (Lotman, 1990: 273). Cultural studies is one such 'semiotic system', and its institutionalisation in publishing houses, universities and colleges, and in various more or less fugitive practices, means that it is both collective and dispersed, with multiple origins, subjectivities and uses. It is a thinking machine that has a life of its own, sometimes at cross-purposes with those of the individuals who thought they had made it.

The history of cultural studies can't be other than sensitive to the volatile and

fugitive nature of ideas about it. Once released, ideas tend to dart about like quarks in the cosmos – everywhere and nowhere at once; hard to identify but important to understand. It might be possible to measure their impact without understanding their origin. So in the realm of ideas, history isn't 'one damn thing after another' (as the saying goes); it's not as simple as tracing causal sequence in phenomena (Thorstein Veblen's phrase). But that is what makes ideas fascinating to follow, not least because studying their history helps to 'contribute to the advance in consciousness which is the common need,' as Williams put it. And, as Eagleton argued, studying what has bothered others is a way of thinking about what bothers the self.

What was cultural studies? For the purposes of this book (i.e. its sequence of chapters), the philosophy of plenty was a series of endeavours, enterprises, essays, not quite mutually commensurate, as follows:

- **Cultural studies as literary political writing:** Why was culture seen as so important by literary writers, critics and publishers? Why was studying culture seen as political (Chapter 1)?
- **Cultural studies as the emancipation of popular readership:** In a climate (or typology) of opposition between popular and high culture, what was the possibility of popular culture carrying serious content, from Shakespeare to contemporary music and media (Chapter 2)?
- **Cultural studies as method:** How were the ingredients of realism, constructivism, civic humanism and art combined in the cultural studies recipe (Chapter 3)?
- **Cultural studies as the political economy of consciousness:** What was the nexus between economy and culture; what determined the economic, political and cultural spheres (Chapter 4)?
- **Cultural studies as the anthropology of everyday modernity:** If 'culture is ordinary', then how to study banal, everyday activities – for example travel, walking, shopping, eating (Chapter 5)?
- **Cultural studies as teaching:** How did cultural studies address its own readers? How did it create a large, transnational, multidisciplinary readership, and bring both astute peers and uncommitted entry-level readers along to share its interests (Chapter 6)?
- **Cultural studies as a publishing venture:** Routledge, Sage, Arnold, Duke, Minnesota, Oxford, Cambridge . . . they were there (References)!

These different histories, topics and questions underlie the six main chapters of the book (and the bibliography). Each brings a slightly different object of study into view. Together they add up to a history of ideas about culture, power, difference and identity that amounts only to what Graeme Turner wisely calls a 'provisional map' (1990: 6). It may be of use among readers – including newly retired detectives – who wish to undertake their own explorations, whether they want to travel just up the coast or across the wide ocean.