Cultural Studies

VIEWED traditionally, the study of culture in national literature programs has tended to supplement or parallel the study of literature. It has taken the form of cultural history or media courses in existing literature departments. Or it has emerged as part of programmatic activities with one or more established disciplines, such as music, history, psychology, political science, philosophy, anthropology, and biological sciences, sometimes organized as a national ("area") studies effort (e.g., American studies, German studies). Or, in both cases, the objects or areas of cultural expression have been treated as belonging to discrete forms of cultural representation, which require for their study methodological and theoretical systems of inquiry that have evolved within the discursive and institutional histories of a particular discipline or medium. According to this version of cultural studies, interdisciplinarity is conceived as a comparative study of cultural discourse, or artifacts consisting within some shared national or international (e.g., European, Latin American, Western) tradition.

What marks a recent departure is the extent to which, in addition to its marginal status as a "subfield" within or between existing disciplines, the rubric cultural studies has come to suggest a remapping of the humanities as a whole around new concerns, new canonical terms, and new theoretical and methodological paradigms. Some of these elements appear far removed from traditional notions of the literary or of culture or even of the text. The designation "cultural studies" has tended to make out an area of conflict concerning the very meaning and relation of text and context, representation and the represented, culture and production and the world in which such production takes place. Where once the study of culture was considered ancillary to that of literature, providing at best a background for the literary text, newer approaches have challenged the conceptual models on which such hierarchical constitution is based. One such challenge questions the very notion of text and context as stable locations at opposite ends of a spectrum. In the place of the "work" as a social, coherent entity to be studied within a complex of mediating, secondary cultural phenomena, cultural studies has sought to problematize the borders of textuality itself and, in so doing, to interrogate the ways in which fields of knowledge are constituted and organized (see Gunn's essay in this volume).

A similar shift in emphasis may be observed in discussions of the canon. Whereas early advocates for the study of working-class, women's, and black literature sought simply to rediscover the "unliterary" or "cultural" materials, recent debates have questioned the notion of canonicity itself. The mention has not been simply to do away with such a framework but rather, to make the critique of canon formation an integral part of interpretive and evaluative investigation. Thus central to cultural studies from its outset has been a debate about the organization of knowledge and the role of the intellectual in the process of cultural change. This essay focuses on this latter meaning of the term cultural studies.

The historical configuration out of which this recent emphasis in cultural studies has emerged is related to structural, pedagogical, and even ideological changes that have occurred in universities since the 1960s: the rapid expansion of education to include social constituencies previously marginalized or underserved--represented in institutions of higher education, together with a rethinking of educational and cultural values in response to challenges and successes of political, social, racial, and sexual difference. As the two, of course, are related, a generation of students that had grown up on TV and rock and roll, coming from increasingly diverse ethnic and social backgrounds, would be less likely to see culture as simply synonymous with high culture and more apt, if only by their presence, to throw into question the implicit norms of prevailing academic study.

Certainly as important impetus for much of what is occurring as cultural studies within national literature fields today may be found in American studies programs of the 1950s and in the film studies, women's studies, and African American programs started in the 1960s and 1970s. It was in the struggle to realize these programs that the problem of interdisciplinarity came to be viewed as a curricular as well as cultural issue. Most important, women's and African American studies programs evolved directly out of the social and political conflicts in society at large and pressed the academy to reflect and in some ways challenge the latest national and educational innovations. Surely the vital theoretical work being done in cultural studies today on questions of gender and race, and their representation in the media, is an outgrowth of this earlier work (see the essays of Schor, Allen, and Gates in this volume).

In literature departments, developments in theoretical practice and curricular organization have called into question the very notion of "literariness" as a discrete discursive or institutional system. This has led to a reorganization of cultural texts to include a wide range of subjects and extra literary experiences previously considered foreign to belles lettres, such as medical texts, sporting events, fashion design, and rock music. Thus the use of the term cultural studies signifies feet and forward a reorientation of perspective and serves as a kind of terminological mutant. It is broad enough to encompass a vast array of competing yet related theoretical critiques of prevailing assumptions about literature, language, representation, gender, culture, hierarchy, and texts. But it is, at the same time, specific enough to signal one aspect of inquiry within literary studies based on historically oriented cultural criticism and devoted to the redefinition of literature to include "nonliterary" materials of the variety—Schor, sensitive to the potential paranoia of the literary faithful, writes:

Cultural studies: a reorientation
CULTURAL STUDIES

Scholes: the exclusivity of literature as a category must be discarded. Our favorite works of literature need not be lost in this new enterprise, but the exclusivity of literature as a category must be discarded. All kinds of texts, visual as well as verbal, polemical as well as didactic, must be taken as the occasions for further textuality. And textual matters must be pushed beyond the discursive boundaries of the page and the book into institutional practices and social practices. (16; see also Scholes' essay in this volume)

The obvious contradictions and paradoxes that would beset any attempt at redefinition from within are paradigmatic for this project as well. Often one is urged to study "literary" as well as "nonliterary" texts and, simultaneously, to challenge the very concept of an autonomous literary discourse. Or we find the struggle against canonical and theoretical hegemony within literary studies in the name of a model that some critics have seen subsuming existing theories, canons, and even disciplines into a new, more "universal," multiculturality, media, gender-critical metadiscourse. Rather than deny its antinomic status, cultural studies often defines itself historically as a challenge to all existing systems and structures. In so doing, it functions as a permanent border action, a force within and yet recklessly transversive of the institutional and discursive forms that have been necessary to its emergence and survival in the first place (see Gurn's essay in this volume, in which the notion of interdisciplinarity is explored more in relation to the confrontation of "allied fields" than as a "composite methodological site")

For example, Terry Eagleton, in his "introduction" to literary theory, is forced to conclude that what he has written is less an introduction than an obituary, and that we have ended by burying the object that we sought to uncover... I am constructing the theories set out in this book not with a literary theory, but with a different kind of discourse—whether one calls it "culture," "signifying practices" or whatever is not of first importance—which would include the objects ("literature") with which these theories deal, but which would transform them in a wider context. (204-05)

With all due respect for Eagleton's dream of interment, assuredly one other achievement of the "concise, witty and entertaining" introduction may indeed have been to "untangle" (and thereby help perpetuate) the "impenetrable world of modern literary criticism for those interested in but with little knowledge of the subject," as the book's dust jacket understandably sought to suggest. My point is not that everything in this volume is beyond the reach of current scholarship, but that its discussions of textual matters are too often linked with a deeper history that is not always discussed in the text. The attempt to redefine cultural studies from within literature departments today that the notion of "literature" is not only one in which one prevailing paradigm is challenged and replaced by another. In the United States, New Criticism is seen to have challenged the "extrinsic" methodologies of the 1930s (Marxism, Freudianism) and, in turn, to have given way to the ascendancy of phenomenology, structuralism, and poststructuralism that is the result. The relationship between cultural and methodological struggles rarely questioned this evolutionary model or its center/margin dichotomy; the two are themselves an expression of a particular notion of theory: a total system and a particular category based on the idea that there is one, "scientific" interpretive model valid for all texts and contexts. The problem of methodological disagreement was often resolved either by retaining the old paradigm or by rejecting it to the margins and establishing a new one (see Lentricchia).
Central to the strategic evolution of cultural criticism has been a programmatic effort to challenge what it sees as the claim to universalism at the heart (or at least the practice) of existing literary theory. This challenge has taken a number of forms. First, there is a tendency to contextualize and decenter theory itself, as is most evident among new-historicists and anthropologically oriented critics in the work of the Birmingham school in Great Britain. Certainly the fact that interdisciplinarity is not only a goal of cultural criticism but in many cases the very condition of its own fragmented evolution has contributed to recontextualizing norms in theory itself. A multiperspective cultural criticism has a number of theological writings from outside the discipline of literature, regardless of their allegiance to a particular deductive, hierarchical system or subject area. Disciplines such as psychoanalysis, anthropology, philosophy, sociology, history, political science, and philosophy see Michel Foucault, Jurgen Habermas, Ferdinand de Saussure, Clifford Geertz, Jacques Lacan, Charles Sanders Peirce, Karl Marx, Walter Benjamin, Antonio Gramsci are joined (some would argue eagerly) and brought to bear in ways that severely strain if not jettison established notions of theoretical coherence or compatibility.

Conversely, cultural theorists have applied methods developed for literary textual analysis to critical models in other fields. The historian Hayden White (Metahistory) and the anthropologist Donna Haraway (普nate Visions) have explored how the discourses of history and anthropology have been shaped by a writer's commitment to stories and narratives. Whereas the more literature-centered have perceived this kind of interdisciplinarity as asserting the "literariness" of nonliterary phenomena and thus extending the relevance of literature as master in the house of a cultural discourse, other cultural critics have argued for the opposite: "interdisciplinarity" as the decentering of the literary within a multitude of equally contesting discursive activities. In both, the importing of theory into the literary domain and literary criticism's intervention into other territories is a clear means of boundaries and centers of definitions and presuppositions that had once been so crucial in marking the differences between contesting critical schools and movements and their ontological starting points as integral theories (see also Gruen's essay in this volume).

Yet despite the claims, assertions, and even achievements, an important epistemological question, experienced perhaps as epistemological double-bind, has fueled the theoretical debates of the cultural studies project in literature departments. Although the emergence of cultural studies clearly results from a breakaway of one kind of theoretical generality, the proposed countermodel—while accepting, and sometimes welcoming, the imposibility of theoretical unicity—has sought to establish common ground around expanded notions of literature, rhetoric, discourse practice, or interdisciplinarity. And it is at this point, of course, that the impasse begins.

While one form of expansion includes a powerful critique of academic theory, it has been aimed at certain kinds and functions of theorizing and thus to be distinguished from such professional "anthropologists" as Stanley Fish, Steven Knapp, and Walter Benn Michaels (see Mitchell). Where Fish, Knapp, and Michaels would do away with the enterprise of theory altogether (as if such a thing were even possible), advocating instead a version of "pragmatism," the cultural critics take issue with the way they see as the ahistorical, apolitical, acontextual, self-referential, and exoticist turn that has taken theoretical form. Moreover, as a theoretical strategy concerned with questions of power and cultural representation, cultural studies has often identified itself polemically with certain social constituencies (women, blacks, Chicanos, the Third World, the "popular"), in relation to particular politics or as an attempt to reconnect the academic enterprise to more worldly concerns.

Some advocates of cultural studies are critical of the isolation of such academic literary theory historically as part of a withdrawal of the humanist intellectual from the public world of literary culture into the enclaves of the university, where critics are said to deliver up their findings "for a coterie of specialized professors and graduate students... in an esoteric jargon of methodological terms" (Graff and Gibbons 8; see also Jacoby). As an antitode to the "fetishism of technique" and philosophical obstinacy deemed prevalent in much of today's humanistic study, these critics would challenge the "New York style" of criticism of the 1930s and 1940s, as practiced in nonacademic journals such as Partisan Review and by cultural critics like Lionel Trilling, Philip Rahv, Harold Rosenberg, and Clement Greenberg.

New York-style criticism is free wheeling and speculative and gets bored easily. It is bored by the close reading of texts; sometimes it is too easily bored with sustained argument altogether. It relies on its authority as "its own voice, not an impressed method or system." (Knapp, "Two Worlds" 60)

Basic to the New York style is a sense of individual moral and political engagement, of intellectual risk-taking within a larger community of public affairs (see also Graff's essay in this volume). While some proponents of this "unahedged secular and worldly" role for the university scholar have cautioned against an excessively antiprofessional position for the bygone days of the metropolitan intellectual (Knapp 158), Graff and Gibbons's preference for a "cultural criticism" based on general ideas "repudiates the overly systematic "superprofessionalism" they associate with linguistically or philosophically oriented methodologies governing literary studies in the academia today (6).

But critiques of "establishment" theory have emerged as well out of the ranks of specialized theory in literature. A notable example is Edward Said, who also laments the isolation of literary intellectuals "from the major philosophical, political, moral and ethical issues of the day" (Wood 212). While Said might not describe himself as a cultural critic, in repudiation of what he calls "left" criticism (for the most part deconstruction, but also antimarxism and other forms of quiescent liberal humanism) offers a convenient means by which to
for "negotiating" the relation between my and all textual representations as a means of exploring the complex of power within a sociocultural context and of widening the borders of the text itself to indicate how it participates and intervenes in a cluster of neighboring discourses. One may well argue that the new historicist's stress on an indeterminate assemblage of data and "thick description" (Geertz), coupled with a "relatively weak theoretical overlay in the invocation of the concept of power" (LaCapra 1991), merely reproduces many of the troublesome aspects of eclecticism and relativism found in "old" historicism. Yet it is also undeniable that such a critique of both deconstruction (for its textual formalism) and Marxism (for its excessive determinism) has invoked a set of critical concerns that have stimulated the cultural theory debates as a whole (see Veeser).

What has been central theoretically for the new historicism is the insistence with which it has challenged and even swept aside the categorical boundaries between text and context, cause and effect, representation and the represented. Whereas traditional models of historical criticism have organized history around a predetermined, unifying contextual center (e.g., state power, the political, economy, patriarchy), which serves, in turn, as explanatory background to the foregrounded cultural text, for new historicists the background itself becomes another source of textual interpretation, made up of written and other forms of representation, to read, less "spectacularly" we are told, "a subtle, elusive set of exchanges, a network of trades and trade-offs, a juggling of competing representations, a negotiation between stock companies" (Greenblatt 7).

Which brings us back to the question of relativism. The critique heard most often of both Foucault and the new historicists, by feminists and Marxists alike, concerns precisely their forfeiture of any position of their own, their refusal to acknowledge the contingency of their analysis of ideological struggle, power without regard to origin, causation, hierarchy, mediation, temporal or spatial location, so that the argument goes, then there is no nonarbitrary way to make judgments about the configuration of contingency at a particular moment—about what, within the intertextuality of linkages, constitutes hegemonic power (vs. powerlessness) or potential resistance or even political meaning (see Habermas).

The question of historical contingency has been particularly important for the various strands of neo-Marxism that have sought to provide a more interdisciplinary basis for cultural studies. The cultural materialism of the British scholar Jonathan Dollimore, for instance, emphasizes precisely the notion of "indeterminacy of cultural representation in historical social forces while at the same time rejecting explicitly any notion of culture as merely reflection of the "economic" and indicating the extent to which human values and emotions themselves produce specific social formations. Whereas Dollimore, in keeping with his Althusserian orientation, is hesitant to adhere to any grand theory of cultural studies...
CULTURAL STUDIES

historical totality that would have caused the differing dimensions of a unified social order, Fredric Jameson looks to a "dialectical" cultural criticism as the "only living philosophy today" that can restore "the notion of a universal object of study underlying the seemingly distinct inquiries into the economic, the political, the cultural, the psychoanalytic, and so forth." (Interview 89). Jameson's Political Unconscious represents just such an attempt to establish Marxist Marxism as a master code, as "the pragmatic historical narrative" that would subsume and relocate the myriad theoretical voices within a critical paradigm capable of grasping the larger story in all its complexity and richness.

Whether such an approach is ever thinkable in concrete circumstances is considered less important than what it says about the order, not only among the Marxists, to lend cohesion to cultural studies and political identities, cognitive linkages, and discursive systems. For certain...
short relief by virtue of their having employed these codes to articulate a personal, artistic vision (see Sarris).

In summation, the containment of mass culture within the American academy operated in a twofold manner. As a methodological level, the privileging of a selectively revised canon effectively newswallof objects and inquiry from throwing into question the critical apparatus as a whole. Such a move, in turn, was reinforced institutionally through curricular curtailment within the safety parameters of the "subfield."

Subsequent developments in mass and popular culture studies have forced a fundamental rethinking of cultural division as well as a broadening of intellectual inquiry. Certainly a major impetus has come from Rist, in particular, the cultural materialism of Raymond Williams, the cultural studies program at Birmingham University, and the writings in Screen magazine. While while much Marxist emphasis view language as a "practical material activity" (Williams, Marxism 38)—that is, a repudiation of the base-superstructure model of traditional Marxism in favor of a reading of culture itself as a "material force"—their differing strategies, emphases, and, finally, politics and methodologies provide an introduction to the central issues generated by the mass culture debate itself.

In his Marxism and Literature, Williams proposes the shift in the meaning of the term "literature" from a general designation, in the Renaissance, for the existing body of books and writing to the emergence, in the eighteenth century, of a narrower notion of literature as "imaginative" or "creative" writing. While this codification served initially to express a certain (minority) level of educational achievement, its refinement into a discourse of "sensibility" and aesthetic taste subsequently became a means by which the "parasitical professor of literary criticism" was to constitute itself in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as a discrete and highly elite discipline within universities. The segregation of literary study along the lines of codified discipline, Williams would argue, did not evolve as the "natural" compartmentalization of human capacities but, like the changing notion of aesthetic and culture occurring during the same period, was a response to "the name of an essentially general creativity to the socially repressive and intellectually mechanical forms of new social order: that of capitalism and especially industrial capitalism" (50).

Although as a cultural critic Williams had relatively little interest in the reading of textual artifacts, his bтинicizing of the canon and high history discourse, together with his call to study popular forms of cultural expression, has helped define a remaking of humanistic study for a generation of British and American cultural critics within and outside the academy. At the Centre for Cultural Studies, for example, a postgraduate program at the University of Birmingham founded in 1964 by Richard Hoggart and devoted primarily to "research of contemporary culture and society," popular culture came to be viewed not simply as a form of value or a collectivist of texts but also as the practices and experiences of everyday life: the way people make gardens or organize holidays, the ideology of credit cards, the content and meaning of...
One that the article's singleness of intention and radical stance helped shift the debates about female representation in ways that have been immensely useful for cultural studies. Simply at the level of textual analysis, critics were forced to consider the ideological implications of specifically cinematic forms of textual organization. Some theorists, to be sure, disagreed with the conclusion of complicating psychoanalytic theory and Hollywood films. Not all critics, regardless of their positions, were completely unfamiliar with the imaginative interpretations of individual films. Many of these readings indeed enriched and even implicated theoretical practice in its struggle to bridge the gap between intertextual and intertextual explorations of mass cultural materials. And key to that bridge, as Medley herself has recently reiterated, was the foregrounding of sexual difference: "Feminism came to find in the cinema of the Hollywood studio system, with its rich and disturbing imaging of sexual difference, a gold mine of raw material ..." (p. 249).

What has marked the feminist project as a significant intervention in studies of mass culture is its ability to broaden and reframe the questions emerging from the initially more narrow, psychologically focused on feminist readings of the cinematic text. In some cases the approach has enabled a historicizing of the cinematic spectator, a perspective that, in turn, has contextualized and delimited the classical Hollywood paradigm itself. The writings of Mary Ann Doane, Miriam Hansen, Lynne Koer, Patricia Press, and Heide Schipper are notable for their attempts to combine insights from psychoanalysis concerning the flow of the female spectator within a system constructed around the male gaze, on the one hand, and historically specific analyses of narratives and audiences in a particular period of industrial development on the other hand. Schipper writes:

1 always see the question of the female spectator in a double perspective, in the context of a production that exploits the female gaze, i.e. addressing it and at the same time rendering it, and in the context of a reception which allows the potential of autonomy, emancipation, subversion, women's writing, and narrative, as well as both

concepts are productive in different ways, that of the cinematic spectator and that of the female position described in the latter. In Schipper's view, the relationship between the two is complex and not easily resolved. (p. 201)

In her important book on the woman's film of the 1940s, Donne makes a similar point, seeing an "interactance" between "audience address" (stratagem is, "conoscopic, explicit or extremely specific, historically") and "spectator positioning" ("basic unconscious positions which establish the very coherence or readability of the text") as a way of contributing to a "more thorough articulation of theoretical and historical approaches to the analysis of spectatorship" (p. 34). Janet Sosnick looks to the female spectator of the Weimar classics precisely in order to mark the psychological and the social and to open up a space in which to theorize the place of the historical subject. Hansen's study of the female spectator in a period of trans-
tion from early to classical cinema combines an "industrial perspective" with ideological and psychosocial analyses, relating the paradigm shift in modes of representation and address with developments in exhibition practice and audience composition (esp. 170). What marks all their work is the effort to maintain a tension between theoretical and historical lines of inquiry, understanding the relation between the textually constructed mode of representation and the larger configuration of events and discourses in which they are situated and to which they respond.

The repositioning of textual representation in the discursive framework of a larger public sphere and in relation to empirical, historical events has helped define and re-define a number of different directions within popular and mass culture research. In some cases the original question of the female spectator has created a greater awareness of other modes of difference, be it of class, gender, or race. For example, the discussions opened up around black filmmaker Spike Lee or the response to the film version of Alice Walker's Color Purple have forced a rethinking of cinematic representation in the light of social and ethnic stereotypes, while providing further means by which the politics of historical representation itself may be given a greater role in university study (Robe).

Similarly, the work of Richard Dyer on gay and lesbian film emphasizes the social construction of such representations within a prescribed and enabling historical context. "Like all cultural production, gay/lesbian film exist in and through the confluence of ways of making sense, the terms of thought and feeling available to them. These limit what can be said but also make saying possible; they bear both form and deform all expression" (171). Beyond cinematic representation, American scholars influenced by the Birmingham model but informed as well by teachings of the Frankfurt school, have turned to reading other media (television, video, radio, magazines, rock music) and other texts and insitutions (Macka, shopping malls, beach culture, fandom) to interrogate the ways in which they have become sites of struggle over semiotic meanings. Their work is characterized by a double perspective that can be seen as paradigmatic for the approaches and disagreements gaining much of cultural studies discussions today.

First, there is the attempt to challenge the macro-cultural approaches that either reinforce or uncritically praise mass culture and, in so doing, to explore the contradictory patterns previously associated with the study of high culture or high modernist texts. For instance, John Fiske's Reading the Popular argues for a more nuanced understanding of the way the power of commodity culture remains a "contexted," not a top-down, relationship "if the cultural commodities of texts do not contain resources out of which the people can make their own meanings of their social relations and identities, they will be rejected and will fail in the marketplace. They will not be made popular" (2). While Fiske's own analysis of "video pleasure" or the evening news indeed offers provocative "readings" of new and important material, his reluctance to place these cultural events in relation to evolving modes of perception and within changing structures of media and commercialization leaves his analysis oblivious to the contextual dimension of the aesthetic questions.

Which brings us to the second consideration in the mass culture debate. What is important about the writings of such authors as Stiegler, Kramer, Walter Benjamin, Bela Balazs, Theodor Adorno, and, more recently, Alexander Kluge and Hans Magnus Enzensberger is precisely their focus on the specificity of any "media" within a complex of differing histories of industrial development, of commodification, of particular genre and narrative tradition, of particular audiences, of discursive performance, of historical and philosophicalecessities, and so on. The emphasis simply on active audience appropriation of mass culture (Fiske) conflates recognition of critical evolution, thus obliterating the potential for a more differentiated focus on historically unprecedented modes of consumption, identification, and subjectivity (see Barthes, Baudrillard, and Hassen).

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE OF CULTURAL STUDIES

The challenge of cultural studies to traditional organizations of knowledge within existing university structures represents more than just the addition of yet another innovative critical strategy for humanistic study. The questions raised touch on fundamental issues concerning how we perceive our educational mission, what we consider worthy of study and debate, who we are as cultural and social human beings. Questions of cultural identity—national, sexual, social—no longer assumed have become global as well as local matters of political contestation. Not surprisingly, the battle lines of controversy in this course have spilled out of the academy into the legitimating agencies of the cultural public sphere (e.g., controversies surrounding the National Endowments for the Humanities and for the Arts), into institutions of power and political articulate.

When former Secretary of Education William Bennett asserts that faculty and college administrators have been guilty of a "collective loss of nerve and faith" that has been "undeniably destructive of the curriculum" (16), he is talking about programmatic developments associated today with the cultural studies movement. For Bennett, the emergence of multiculturalism as a challenge to a unified canon of Western values founded on a set of traditional texts is transitory to the abandonment of intellectual integrity by a generation lacking the courage to stand up for what it believes. "The curriculum was no longer a statement about what knowledge mattered; instead it became the product of a political compromise among competing schools and departments overlaid with marketing considerations" (19-20). That Bennett and other conservative critics such as Allan Bloom, E. D. Hirsch Jr., and Walter Jackson Bate have articulated the so-called decline of the modern university to the radical upheaval of the 1960s forces us, at the very least, to rethink the categories of present and future discussion.
Cultural Studies

Critics on both sides of the canon debate would agree with Bennett's assertion that the humanities are currently in crisis and that the curriculum is no longer a "statement about what knowledge matters." Disagreement emerges, however, around how to interpret such a breakdown of cultural consensus. Conservatives tend to view the curriculum debate within the humanities as synonymous with the capitulation of traditional authority to intellectual lightweights—a "closing of the American Midi" (Blumberg) or a "compromise to mediocrity," and go on to argue that only in efforts to reclaim the legacy of the humanities can save the university. Advocates of cultural studies, for their part, have glimpsed in the crisis a challenge to enshrined social and ethnic divisions as well as an opportunity to register the impact of forces of consumerism in the mass media emerging from economic developments since the 1950's (see Reisling). In some cases, their efforts to broaden the canon have led to a lack of cohesion or even the replacement of a traditional canon by an equally narrow and rigid alternative. Furthermore, Bennett is indeed correct in warning about the fashionable, market-drivers aspects of the cultural studies boom (see Morris 4-5).

But what is at the heart of the canon controversy, beyond the concern with this or that curriculum, are fundamental differences about the role of culture in modern society and about the responsibilities of academic intellectuals as critics of society. The positioning of conservatism and mass-mediated culture since the 1950's has profoundly altered the way we know and act in society. For university education, this change has forced scholars to confront problems of visual literacy as an integral part of higher education. The profusion of images in the media, in advertising, and in politics, as well as the expansion of cable television and independent video, has fed academic institutions to include the historical and critical analysis of images and visual signs in humanities courses. Such developments have produced a breakdown of boundaries at every level, a result of marketing all cultural products as commodities circulated in an exchange in the erosion of clear-cut distinctions between high and mass-culture; through the influx and blurring of semiotic studies, in re-formulations of what constitutes a "text," with the development of offering methodological paradigms in a new of conceptual models across disciplinary borders. Moreover, the increasing utilization of cultural representation for business and politics has transformed every culture's relationship to cultural production as a whole. The emergence of cultural criticism as a component of academic study has been, in part, a response to the changing notions of culture in mass-mediated society. We as scholars of culture have been forced to come to terms with the power of representation in organizing public fantasy for the selling of goods, the packaging of candidates, or the understanding of social difference.

Certainly cultural studies will also have to concern itself with the way strategies of representation work themselves out on a global scale via-vis our shifting relations with Eastern Europe, the Third World, and a postcolonial politics. Here the work of cultural scholars has been vital in posing questions about the performative nature of political organization and the power of representation both to control and to disrupt. In his anthology Nation and Narration, Homi Bhabha raises fundamental issues about the future of cultural studies in relation to national identity. What is the nature of the ideology of the modern nation? How do questions of race and gender, class and colonialism change the boundaries of national identity? How is national identity itself the construction of a particular historical imaginary? Gayatri Ch. Spivak's in Other Worlds and Edward Said's Orientalism touch on similar questions and are as important for their methodologies as for their individual textual analyses. What is important about all such work is the extent to which it has redefined the social context of cultural representation as well as the role of intellectuals as the teaching of these ideas. Cornell University

Works Cited and Suggestions for Further Reading:


David Butler
Epilogue