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ESSAYS ON CULTURAL STUDIES

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descriptions. The questions of postmodernity as a historical reality, whether experiential or tendential, have to be theorized within the context of the theory of articulation and wild realism, that is, within the spaces between cultural studies and postmodernism. This has two important consequences. First, from the perspective of cultural studies, it locates the critique of postmodernism in the project of inflecting such descriptions into a less global and more consistent context of theorizing. For example, we can reread Baudrillard's theory as a contribution to the analysis of the changing politics of representation in history. Baudrillard has described three planes of discursive effects that not only compete with and displace one another but that may be simultaneously operative and historically organized in any particular formation. Thus rather than making a global and ontological argument, Baudrillard's theory of the simulacrum marks the local articulations (and power relations) among three planes of discursive effectivity: representation, mediation, and modeling.

Second, from the perspective of postmodernism, it locates the critique of cultural studies in the project of detailing the determining displacements, gaps, and in some cases even ruptures that have become constitutive of our contemporary existence. There are powerful new historical determinations (e.g., the destructability and disposability of the planet; significant redistributions of wealth, population, and power; new structures of commodity production; new media of communication), ideological and affective experiences (e.g., the collapse of visions of the future and of transcendental values capable of giving shape and direction to our lives; an increasing sense of justified paranoia, terror, and boredom). Hall has already opened up these spaces by giving a central role to questions about the relation between the media and the masses (as it is defined in Benjamin's theory of history) and between leadership and the popular (in Gramsci's theory of hegemony). But they remain undeveloped, and one must assume that this is due, in part, to the difficulty of accounting for their effectivity within the traditional marxist categories of power.

The fact remains that such "postmodern events" appear to have an increasingly significant place in our everyday lives and that the discourses that anchor themselves in these events appear to have a powerful place in our cultural relations. Both postmodernism and cultural studies need to find ways of describing the complex contexts—the conjunctural formations—within which the possibilities of struggle are shaped, grasped, and enacted.

## The Formation(s) of Cultural Studies:

### An American in Birmingham



Any observer of the current academic scene in the United States will surely note that there is a cultural studies "boom" (Morris 1988d). As Allor (1987) notes, the term itself has become a cultural commodity, apparently free to circulate in the global economy of discourse, ideas, and cultural capital. Five years ago the term functioned largely as a proper name, referring primarily to a specifically British tradition, extending from the work of Raymond Williams and Richard Hoggart, through the contributions of the various members of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham, to the increasingly dispersed and institutionalized sites of its contemporary practitioners. Additionally—and especially within the field of communication—the term also referenced a uniquely American tradition rooted in the social pragmatism of the Chicago school of social thought. However, "cultural studies" is becoming one of the most ambiguous terms in contemporary theory as it is increasingly used to refer to the entire range of what previously had been thought of as "critical theory" (i.e., a range of competing theories of the relation of society and culture, of ideology and art, largely derived from "high literary theory" and anthropology, with communication and popular culture once again relegated to a secondary position).

While it is futile to protest against this appropriation of the term, it is important to point to a set of potential dangers: namely, that British cultural studies is reduced to a singular position or a linear history (thus ignoring its differences) or dispersed into a set of unrelated differences (thus ignoring its unity). The consequence is made all the more likely by the forms of the current interest in British cultural studies and the exigencies of its appearance in the United States. Understanding the "unity in difference" of this tradition requires us to recognize that it has always responded to the particular conditions of its intellectual, political, social, and historical contexts. The

result is that within the tradition, theoretical positions are always provisional takes, meant to give us a better purchase on the world and always implicated within ongoing intellectual and political struggles. Any "position" is always engaged in and constituted by response to debates with other positions. Cultural studies has always been a contested terrain, and the contestation takes place both within and outside of the tradition itself. In fact, if cultural studies is seen as an open-ended and ongoing theoretical struggle to understand and intervene into the existing organizations of active domination and subordination within the formations of culture, then the boundaries of the tradition are themselves unstable and changing, sites of contestation and debate.

Failing to recognize the history and practice of this unity-in-difference threatens to dehistoricize intellectual practices and avoids the more difficult task of rearticulating the insights and practices of cultural studies into the specific contexts of our own work. If there is no single cultural studies position, we have to understand the projects, the commitments, and the vectors according to which it has continued to rearticulate itself, how it has constantly renegotiated its identity and repositioned itself within changing political and intellectual maps. Its history is a history of political engagements and theoretical debates in response to which alternative positions are constantly being taken into account and new positions offered. In this process, the very questions at the heart of cultural studies—its problematics—are constantly being reshaped and reinflected.

I want to begin this project by looking at some of the complexly structured differences that constitute the tradition of British cultural studies. Specifically, I will isolate one set of vectors that construct a specific formation around the biographical figure of Stuart Hall and the intellectual and political commitments of marxism. It is important to remember that this was not the only formation within the Centre (or within British cultural studies), but it does largely define the uniqueness of the Centre; other formations and lines of thought had other institutional sites in addition to their location within the Centre. However, we must remember that this formation itself has always been full of contradictions and antagonisms, defined individually and socially, intellectually and politically.

Not surprisingly, a version of the history of this formation within cultural studies has already been established and put into place. Within this narrative, cultural studies is constituted by two lines of determination. First, it has constantly emerged out of a series of debates with its theoretical "others," struggles within which cultural studies is often represented, in the end, as

having taken the middle ground between theoretical extremes. Second, cultural studies has constantly rearticulated itself in direct response to overt historical events and demands. In this narrative, cultural studies is seen to offer a materialist theory of ideology and discourse. I want to argue not only that the narrative is too linear (and progressivist), that it ignores the continuing vitality and influence of earlier moments in the narrative, but also that it fails to account for the continuing challenge, from within the history of the formation, of competing definitions of the project of cultural studies. The contestation within cultural studies was not merely around competing theories of the politics of culture, or the relationship of culture to power, but also around differing theories of the nature of cultural and historical specificity. That is, within cultural studies, the question of its own problematic was itself constantly, if implicitly, called into question.

Despite these weaknesses, it is useful to begin by summarizing this taken-for-granted, "standard" history (Turner 1990). I will do this by presenting the two inter related but analytically separable lines of determination (political and intellectual). Then I will offer a different, more contentious reading of this formation of cultural studies, a reading partly determined by my own history and situation (an American who studied at the Centre at a particular moment and who has maintained close ties with it), and partly determined by my own cultural and political contexts. I will no doubt continue to romanticize many aspects of the work of the Centre, but I do not mean to ignore its very real problems and failures. There were significant structured absences, questions that remain unaddressed, political struggles that remained "outside" of the cultural. Its ability to reflexively analyze its own practice was too often too limited. Forms of collective work were celebrated without analyzing the ways in which they could disempower as well as empower individuals and groups. Class and gender relations institutionalized within the academy remained sites of silence for too long and, despite a real concern for popular culture, the intellectual distancing from the popular characteristic of the traditional intellectual remained in place for too long (Fry 1988). Nevertheless, I believe that the Centre (and the formation of cultural studies I am describing) is important not only intellectually, but also as a model of interdisciplinary, collective, and politically engaged research. Finally, I want at least to acknowledge the fact that this formation of cultural studies was produced in the social interactions of real individuals with their own agendas and biographies. A part of the history of the Centre—a part that I will not discuss here—involves the changing histories and relations of those working

at the Centre and in cultural studies. Like C. Wright Mills, cultural studies has always embraced the passion of intellectual and political work (even if it rarely theorized passion in its objects of study). Such work is always determined partly by the very real—and, in the case of the Centre, enduring—relationships and communities (both positive and negative) that such work produces, even if only through imaginary and retrospective identifications. And the unity-in-difference of cultural studies is partly the result of very real social and emotional relationships.

#### A NORMATIVE HISTORY OF CULTURAL STUDIES: POLITICAL CONTEXTS

Cultural studies emerged in the 1950s at the intersection of a number of complex historical experiences. Sometimes the focus was on “the Americanization of Britain” and at others on the new forms that modernization was taking after the Second World War. Both descriptions pointed to the appearance of a “mass culture” made possible through the rationalization, capitalization, and technologization of the mass media. Within this new cultural space, for the first time, the vast majority of the population were incorporated into a common audience of cultural products. Of course, the concern for “mass culture” preexisted the Second World War. But the obviously central role of American culture and capital in these changes, their increasing reach into British society through popular cultural and communicative forms, seemed to make the threat they posed more substantial and specific. This threat was aimed neither at communities nor elites, but rather at class cultures and the possibilities of a democratic cultural formation.<sup>1</sup>

A second historical development was the emergence of the New Left—which counted among its members many of the founding figures of cultural studies—in response, at least in part, to the failure of the traditional marxist Left to confront, in both theoretical and political terms, the beginnings of late capitalism, the new forms of economic and political colonialism and imperialism, the existence of racism within the so-called democratic world, the place of culture and ideology in relations of power, and the effects of consumer capitalism upon the working classes and their cultures.

In the sixties other concerns impinged upon cultural studies, and while they did not totally displace the earlier concerns, they often gave them new inflections. Here again, one can point to two exemplary developments: first, the growing importance of the mass media, not only as forms of entertainment but, inseparably, as what Althusser called “ideological state appara-

tuses.” There was, in fact, quite explicitly, a significant focus during the sixties (and through much of the seventies) on the more overt ideological functions of the media—in news and documentary programming—where one could see a direct connection to the political sphere. This narrowing of focus was contradicted to some extent by the second development that engaged cultural studies in the sixties: the emergence of various subcultures that seemed, in various ways, to resist at least some aspects of the dominant structures of power. Yet these subcultures were organized around nontraditional political issues, contradictions, and social positions, and struggled in the uncommon terrain of popular culture. Obviously the rise of various working-class youth cultures, and the sustained organization of a middle-class oppositional subculture, had an enormous impact on the work of cultural studies.

In the seventies, we might again identify two significant developments, both of which have had immediate and powerful effects on cultural studies. First, the renewed appearance of political and theoretical work around relations of gender and sexual difference. The response to feminism was immediate and sustained, if not always completely sympathetic or adequate. Nevertheless, I think it is fair to say that there is no cultural studies that is not “postfeminist,” not in the sense of having moved beyond it, but rather in the sense of having opened itself to the radical critique and implications of feminist theory and politics. The second development was equally powerful, disturbing cultural studies’ too easy identification and celebration of resistance (which rested upon a taken-for-granted analysis of domination and subordination). I am referring to the rise of the New Right as a powerful political and ideological force in Britain (as well as in other advanced capitalist democratic countries). Additionally, the fortunes of the neoconservatives seemed to be inversely related to the fragmentation, if not the apparent collapse, of organized opposition from the Left. As new political agencies and positions emerged on the Right, the traditional Left seemed incapable of offering coherent strategies and responses.

Finally, in the eighties, many of these problems continue to assert themselves, albeit in different and in some cases even more pressing forms. Moreover, there is a return of many of the more apocalyptic concerns that had emerged in the immediate postwar period (global threats to the future and epochal experiences of irrationality, terror, and meaninglessness), which reappear with great force both in popular media and intellectual discourses. Equally important is the increasing self-consciousness of our own insertion

into the construction of domination in our relations to the production of intellectual work and students, and our complex relations to political differences at all levels of the social formation. And finally, the fact that the victory of the Right has been secured—apparently, at least enough to allow Thatcher to undermine significantly the social infrastructure of Britain—can be measured in the Left's apparent distance from the majority of the population (not only that between academics and their students) and the inability of the Left to secure new ground from which to organize opposition.

#### A NORMATIVE HISTORY OF CULTURAL STUDIES: THEORETICAL DEVELOPMENT

These political and historical concerns were organized by, responded to with, and mapped onto a series of theoretical debates and challenges. Sometimes these debates placed cultural studies on one side (e.g., when it firmly opposed what it saw as the abandoning of the materialist problematic by poststructuralist and psychoanalytic discourse theorists). More often, cultural studies places itself between the two extremes, as in Hall's description (1980c) of the need to locate the space between the dominant "two paradigms." In fact, cultural studies seems to slide, almost inevitably, from the former to the latter positioning (e.g., Hall [unpubl.] currently places cultural studies not in opposition to psychoanalysis but rather in between its extreme forms and those who would either deny its truth or water down its radical insights). Opposing alternative positions enables it to maintain its own identity and that of its specific problematic and commitments. But mediation allows it to take into account its own inadequacies and the insights that reflect its problematic and commitments into new historical contexts. Thus one of the most common rhetorical figures in cultural studies is that which positions its intellectual antagonist as having rightly attempted to avoid one extreme position but having mistakenly gone "right through to the other extreme." Within these debates, which often took place within the Centre as well as between the Centre and other institutionalized sites of intellectual activity, we should not be surprised to find that each side necessarily misreads and misrepresents the other side in order to reconstitute its own position.<sup>2</sup>

The beginning of cultural studies is usually located in the debate between the socialist humanism of Williams, Thompson, and Hoggart (despite the significant political differences among them) and traditional marxist, literary, and historical approaches to contemporary life and politics. The former, including the original New Left group, challenged the economic reductionism

of the marxists, arguing for the importance of the creative human actor, of human experience, and of the determining power of cultural production itself. They similarly rejected (to varying degrees) the elitism that was used to justify the erasure of working-class people and culture from the study of history. Such "culturalists," the first to attempt to define cultural studies, argued that culture was not only the site of struggle but its source and measure as well. Culture was the intersection of textuality and experience, and the task of criticism was to examine how the former represented and misrepresented the latter. They rejected both a theory of dominance (which denied the reality of cultural struggle) and a theory of reflection (which radically separated culture and society, reading society off the meanings of culture even as it was located outside of them).

But cultural studies emerges as a disciplinary formation and intellectual position in the confrontation (initially it was often silent) between this humanistic marxism (which Hall calls "culturalism") and the antihumanism of Althusser's structural marxism. The latter pointed to the former's reductionist assumption of a series of necessary correspondences between cultural forms, experience, and class position. Althusser challenged any appeal to either the subject or experience as the source or measure of history since neither existed outside the processes of historical (and specifically ideological) determination. At the same time, he recognized the power and relative autonomy of the cultural realm. By distancing the "real" as the determining moment of history (in either the first or last instance), Althusser gave renewed impetus to the project of defining the specificity of the cultural. It is out of this debate that the position many people identify with Birmingham cultural studies arises. It is a moment in which, to put it emblematically, Williams is "saved" by rereading him through Althusserian structuralism.

In the mid-seventies, this refined culturalism enters into very explicit (and often heated) debates, not with Althusserianism, but with a different appropriation of structural marxism. If cultural studies tempered Williams's humanism with structuralism (and in so doing, backed off from Althusser's radical antihumanism), it opposed those theories that took Althusser into the poststructuralist realm of the necessary lack of correspondence with a new reading of Gramsci, who served to define a different "middle ground." Such "discourse theories" read Althusser's theory of ideology, often in conjunction with Foucault's theory of power, through a Derridean explosion of both signification and subjectification. Moreover, culturalism opposed those who, often from within the Centre, attempted to link Althusser (and perhaps post-

structuralism) with a Lacanian psychoanalysis which abandoned any notion of history in favor of a predefined psychoanalytic trajectory constantly traced out upon ideological practices. Both versions of “poststructural Althusser” ignored the materialist question of the role of ideology in the reproduction of the social formation in favor of what might be described as a discursive theory of social psychology. Cultural studies argued that such theories reduced the question of social identity and its political import to the predetermined repetition of textual and/or libidinal processes. Furthermore, such positions seemed incapable of theorizing even the possibility of resistance except through the production of radically alternative and avant-garde discursive forms. Such forms would either necessarily celebrate the infinite plurality of meaning and the endless fragmentation of the subject, or they would escape the political terrain entirely by appealing to the ultimate political undecidability of any text.

On the other hand, poststructural appropriations of Althusser argued that cultural studies’ continued commitment to humanism (with its concomitant notions of essentialized class identities and experiences) made it impossible to theorize the production of subjectivity and subject-positions as a significant ideological effect that often contradicted the surface content of cultural forms. While cultural studies thought of ideology as a continuous process by which identities, organized at sites of social difference, were given meaning, it was unable to theorize the more fundamental nature of the process by which identities and social differences are themselves produced together as subject-positions. Thus it was not fortuitous that it would seek out and celebrate the sites of cultural resistance in the working classes; but at the same time, it was incapable of seeing that the forms of such resistances often reinscribed dominant relations of power—especially racism and sexism.

What emerged from this debate, according to the standard history, was a significantly different position, which can be seen as either a (re)reading of Gramsci (through Althusser) as a nonstructuralist antihumanist or, alternatively, as a rereading of Althusser (through Gramsci, who had of course been a source of Althusser’s theorizing), without altogether following the poststructuralists, psychoanalysts, and discourse theorists out of the materialist problematic. This Gramscian position defined cultural studies as a nonreductionist marxism that was concerned with understanding specific historical contexts and formations, that assumed the lack of guarantees in history and the reality of struggles by which historical relationships are produced. Such a “conjuncturalist” theory refuses to assimilate all practices to

culture and recognizes the real structuration of power according to relations of domination and subordination. It sees history as actively produced by individuals and social groups as they struggle to make the best they can out of their lives, under determinate conditions.

But this position is already entangled in yet another significant debate: its focus on historical and cultural specificity has led it into direct confrontation with the “postmodernist” theories of Baudrillard, Lyotard, Virillio, and others. While this moment has not yet been incorporated into this linear narrative, the debate between these two narrative opposites is already being constructed as the next chapter of the story. Thus it is already clear that the opposition of cultural studies to the extremism of much of postmodernist theorizing—to its radical critique of the very possibility of any structure, of any meaning, of any subject, and of any politics, and to its reinscription of a form of reductionism in which every text becomes a reflection of our non-contradictory existence within the postmodern condition—is resulting in yet another significant move.

#### CULTURAL STUDIES: NARRATIVIZING A WAR OF POSITIONS

I do not want to argue against this history so much as to reread it in order to open it up to greater complexities. It is, as far as it goes, an accurate and important map of cultural studies’ shifting position in relation to the larger field of materialist and structuralist theories of ideology and culture. Even more importantly, it allows us to see that the identity of any theoretical position within this larger terrain is constituted by a series of differences among the range of possible positions. Thus, to a limited extent, this narrative already suggests that cultural studies is constituted through a series of struggles around certain key concepts and critical strategies. For example, the meaning of “hegemony” within cultural studies cannot be taken for granted. There are significant, and in fact constitutive, differences between its appearance not only in Williams and Gramsci, but in the culturalist and the conjuncturalist positions of the Birmingham group. This normative narrative represents the history as a “war of maneuvers” in which a series of closed paradigms, each with its fixed set of assumptions, oppose each other. The narrative represents either a gradual and rational transformation through intellectual dialogue or a series of radically disjunctive and totalized paradigm shifts. In either case, the development of cultural studies appears to be linear, progressive, and internally directed. Cultural studies is portrayed as the continuing struggle to

realize its own already defined, if imperfectly articulated, project (e.g., an anti-essentialist, antireductionist, anti-elitist cultural theory). Although not necessarily teleological, the narrative constructs a series of stages that did not have the necessary conceptual and reflexive tools to accomplish the project.

Moreover this narrative ignores the continuous debates within and between the variety of positions offered, not only over time but at any moment, within the Centre and cultural studies. It also ignores the ongoing labor of transformation that has operated on the complex and contradictory terrain of cultural studies. An alternative reading of that history would have to recognize that, within the discourses of cultural studies, theory proceeds discontinuously and often erratically, that it involves an ongoing struggle to rearrange and redefine the theoretical differences of the terrain itself in response to a particular set of historical questions.

Such a revisionist reading would begin with cultural studies as a historically articulated discursive formation, constantly redefining itself across a range of questions. Rather than assuming an essential and unified harmony, it would begin with diverse sets of conjoint positions in contention with each other at a variety of sites. Rather than offering a rational history of dialectical development, it would constantly destabilize the correspondences between conceptual differences and historical trajectories in order to describe a war of positions, operating over a range of theoretical and political sites. Cultural studies often moves onto terrain it will later have to abandon; and it often abandons some terrain it will later have to reoccupy. Cultural studies, like any critical project, has had its share of false starts which, however necessary, have often taken it down paths it has had to struggle to escape, forcing it at times to retrace its steps and at other times to leap onto paths it had barely imagined. Texts that were read at one point had to be read again; commitments that were articulated had to be reestablished at some moments and deconstructed at others.

If we begin to consider the discontinuities as well as the continuities in the various ways cultural studies has occupied and reshaped its own terrain, we need to identify some signposts for the various sites of struggle in this war of positions. Only then can we renarrativize the formation of cultural studies, not merely as one of intellectual influence and progress, but as a continuing struggle, on the one hand to define the specificity of *cultural struggle* and on the other hand to comprehend the specificity of the *historical context* of modernity and modernization within and against which contemporary cultural practices function. We might all acknowledge that cultural studies is

concerned with describing and intervening in the ways “texts” and “discourses” are produced within, inserted into, and operate in the everyday lives of human beings and social formations, so as to reproduce, struggle against, and perhaps transform the existing structures of power. That is, if people make history but in conditions not of their own making, cultural studies explores the ways this is enacted within and through cultural practices and the place of these practices within specific historical formations. But this description—which underlies the standard narrative—fails to recognize that cultural studies has continuously problematized not only the meaning of “culture” and “society,” but the historical articulations of the relationships between them.

I shall begin by identifying eight sites of what in contemporary political parlance might be called “low-intensity warfare,” eight theoretical and political issues. They are not all specific to cultural studies but they do enable us to map out some of its directions and tendencies. For the sake of brevity, I will merely list the eight theoretical problematics. They are, I will assume, fairly self-explanatory (and if they are not, they will be explained as the shifts in position are charted): (1) epistemology and interpretation; (2) determination; (3) agency; (4) the structure of the social formation; (5) the structure of the cultural formation; (6) power; (7) the site of cultural struggle; and (8) the historical site of modernity (see Table 1). In what follows, I will not offer a complete and accurate description of any position (since these are available in other places); instead I want merely to show how the answers to these questions have changed, and often in ways that are neither necessary nor even necessarily consistent across the entire range.

On top of this “field of dispersion” I want to reinscribe a certain narrative structure of the development of cultural studies. While this revised trajectory will resemble the standard story (the war of maneuvers), it will allow that narrative to incorporate the fractured and uneven development implicit in the war of positions being fought out along the eight vectors I have listed. I will abstract from the ongoing battles across a wide range of conceptual and strategic differences five temporarily stable forms within the formation of cultural studies: (1) the literary humanism (of Hoggart and Williams); (2) the early eclectic effort to define a dialectical sociology; (3) the first distinctly “Centre position”; (4) a structural-conjuncturalist position; and (5) a postmodern-conjuncturalist position. Let me emphasize again the artificiality of my narrative. While these positions may be taken (for the sake of argument) as representing real stages in the history of the Centre or of cultural

Table 1 A Reference Map of Cultural Studies via Eight Theoretical Problematics

	<i>Literary humanism</i>	<i>Dialectical sociology</i>
<i>Epistemology</i>	intuitive empiricism	structural empiricism
<i>Determination</i>	atomic essentialism	dialectical essentialism
<i>Agency</i>	humanistic-aesthetic	social humanism
<i>Social formation</i>	class	class
<i>Cultural formation</i>	elite/masses	public/private
<i>Power</i>	legitimation/value	consent
<i>Specificity of cultural struggle</i>	culture/society as structure of feeling	ideology as worldview
<i>Site of modernity</i>	mass media	mass media

studies, or as interpretations of particular texts, they are actually abstractions out of the complex terrain of cultural studies meant to suggest something about the multiple sites and vectors along which the war of positions is constantly fought. Individual authors and works constantly moved around the terrain, often sliding back or forward along these idealized vectors. While I will make some effort to point to some of the disjunctions between the intellectual narrative and the real history of this particular formation of the Centre, I do not mean to offer a "true" historical account. These "positions" represent, at best, provisional efforts to occupy particular sites in specific ways and to connect them together into effective responses to the politics of the cultural and social context. Despite the apparent historicity of the narrative, they are offered as a map of the changing state of play in the field of forces that constitute cultural studies, and each of them continues to exist.

I will argue, first, that many of the commitments of cultural studies were defined by the effort to move against the "literary-humanistic pull" of Hoggart and his conceptualization of its project in opposition to mass communication theory. In this effort, cultural studies increasingly identified its object of study—communication—with a particular conceptual framework (a particular dialectical model of communication). It established a series of correspondences: between culture, ideology, communication, community, experience, and intersubjectivity. It is these assumed relationships that later, conjunc-

<i>"Culturalism"</i>	<i>Structural-conjunctural</i>	<i>Postmodern-conjunctural</i>
conventionalism	realism/contextualism	fabrication/apparatus
structural essentialism	articulation as specificity	articulation as effectivity
social humanism	social articulation	nomadic articulation
structure in dominance	fractured totality	fractured totality
center/margin	dominant/popular	sensibilities
incorporation/resistance	domination/subordination	empowerment/disempowerment
ideology as experience	civil society	the popular
consumption	hegemony	the masses

turalist, positions would have to deconstruct. Second, I will argue that the moment of the formation of a "Centre position" depended upon a limited appropriation of structuralism into the continued framework of the struggle between a literary and sociological pull. This effort was embodied, figuratively and historically, in the constant return to the texts of Gramsci on the one hand and Althusser/Poulantzas on the other, each time rereading their positions in light of the effort to rearticulate the historical project of cultural studies.

#### A LITERARY HUMANISTIC VISION OF CULTURAL STUDIES

Richard Hoggart was the founder of both the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies and of cultural studies as an identifiable analytic/critical project. Through a series of lectures (1967, 1970) as well as the classic if oddly titled study, *The Uses of Literacy* (1957), he gave cultural studies its first intellectual shape. However great the distance that seems to have been traversed since that early moment, his influence is still strongly present. Hoggart extended and refined Leavis's notion of literary criticism. He argued that art, if read according to the specific practices of "close reading" that characterized literary criticism ("reading for tone"), revealed something about society that was unavailable in any other way: what he described as "the felt quality of life" and later as "a field of values." He explicitly located cultural studies in the line of critical concern that Raymond Williams (1958) had



constructed as “the culture and society tradition.” Its task was value analysis but its goal was value judgment. The question, defined with a decidedly literary pull, was not so much what people do with texts, but rather the relations between complex cultural texts and “the imaginative life” of their readers (1969, 18). Cultural studies was to explore the points at which the value-laden structures of society intersect and interact with the psychic life of individuals as represented in cultural texts (19). Although Hoggart’s ultimate concern was always centered on the normative dimension of the structures of meaning, he argued forcefully for the complex multidimensionality of cultural existence. One could not understand the impact of cultural changes apart from the dense, sensuous, everyday life of the people: “Only here in art is life embodied, re-created, in all its dimensions—so that a particular moral choice is bound up with this time and that place, with that other person and those habits. Only here do we, at one and the same time, see ourselves densely and vulnerably; and also as creatures who think and dream outside the time-ridden texture of daily experience. This is, to borrow a nice phrase to describe the fusion, ‘the real world of theology and horses’” (1970, 249).

Similarly, Raymond Williams (1965) had argued that any cultural text could only be understood in the context of the entire social formation, of the relations among all the elements in a whole way of life. And this totality was not reducible to a semantic abstraction divorced from the lived experience of individuals. Williams argued that the significance of any cultural text was always mediated by its relationship (which he assumed to be that of a structural homology) to the “structure of feeling.” Hall’s early (n.d.) model of the labor of cultural studies clearly demonstrates the distance between the Centre’s project and that of the more socially based disciplines of communication studies: first, to obtain “as full a ‘reading’ of the material as is possible, using critical analysis both of content and structure, and of attitudes and assumptions, latent as well as manifest values.” Second, “to consider its effect upon society, the nature of its appeal and popularity.” And third, to “place” the material “in its social and cultural setting” and to interpret it, “as far as is possible, for its cultural meaning and significance.”

At the same time, the Centre was seeking to find models of collective, interdisciplinary work that would enable them to carry out the project. Hoggart emphasized that the requirements of knowledge and competence would demand a methodology that was fractured across disciplines. Its model of

interdisciplinary research was “divide and unite”: literary studies on one side, sociologists and anthropologists on the other. They were to be brought together, to educate, enlighten, and help one another, but they remained separated; literary analysis was a difficult task that took a sophisticated education, and sociology was a discipline too far removed from it. Of course, the ultimate task was for the two disciplines to bring their insights together, to be able to offer new and important insights into the relationship between culture and society. Hall on the other hand focused on the need to work through and unite the three moments of cultural studies: “The analysis would not, of course, be split up into three separate phases: but it would not be complete until all three phases were carried through and related together” (n.d.).

Hoggart’s position was built upon a number of commitments and assumptions. Epistemologically, it followed the path of Leavis’s intuitive empiricism: close reading revealed the meaning of a text. This was obviously linked, through its strong literary pull (in its sense not only of method but of value as well), to a rather simple theory of determination, which might be described as “atomic essentialism.” Both texts and cultures were self-identical and their relations could be read through an assumed necessary correspondence. Behind this correspondence was the (imaginative and creative) individual as the agency of history or at least of that province that was the concern of cultural studies. Moreover, behind the historical changes that *The Uses of Literacy* seemed to be tracing was a rather nostalgic sense of an “authentic” working-class experience. If its model of the social formation was that of class struggle, it was defined, especially in the specific terms of culture, in a decidedly non-Marxist way: the people caught between an artistic and a media elite. Power is necessarily expressed in terms of a struggle for legitimation and exposure, as the colonization of one way of life by the communicative “field of values” of a dominant elite rather than the expression and critique of a way of life by an artistic elite. And cultural struggle involved a war of legitimacy and cultural status. Finally, the specific site of modernity that concerned Hoggart was the mass media. *The Uses of Literacy* was taken to be a study in the ways in which the new cultural forms of mass media and Americanization were “colonizing” the working class. It was read “—such were the imperatives of the moment—essentially as a text about the mass media” (Centre 1969–71, 2). Consequently cultural studies was often framed as a literary-based alternative to the existing work on mass communication. “The notion that the Centre, in directing its attention to the critical study of ‘contemporary

culture' was, essentially, to be a Centre for the study of television, the mass media and popular arts . . . though never meeting our sense of the situation . . . nevertheless came, by default, to define us and our work" (2).

It was in this complex set of positions that the specificity of cultural studies was initially constituted: it studied the relationship between culture and society at a particular point of intersection, a point at which one had moved from texts and social structures to the whole way of life, to the structure of feeling. Here one was operating between the two realms or, perhaps more accurately, in their overlap. There was, however, even in its earliest stages, a certain dissatisfaction with the position and the way cultural studies was constructed within it. Thus at the same moment—in fact, as early as 1966—an alternative if undeveloped model of cultural studies was taking shape; one built upon a different reading of *The Uses of Literacy*: "Its graphic portrayal of the extremely complex ways in which the 'springs of action' of a subordinate class might be 'unbent' by a dominant culture intent, with the new means of communication at its disposal, of winning consent precisely in that class—the link, that is, indissoluble as it turned out, between the 'first' and the 'second' halves of *The Uses of Literacy*" (Centre 1969–71, 2). Furthermore, Hall was increasingly drawn to the project of locating this argument within a marxist theory of "mediations," a discursive image that was to increasingly dominate the work of the Centre and to displace the literary concerns of Hoggart: "Certainly, where the critic moves from the text 'in itself' to its relation to society and culture, the 'mediations' between the two need to be as clearly established as is possible, given the nature of the material studied and the complexity of relations which it is possible to discover" (Hall, n.d.).

#### THE FORMATION OF DIALECTICAL SOCIOLOGY

Historically speaking, the "second phase" of the Centre's work, which proceeded from the late sixties into the early seventies, often disappears. There are at least two significant reasons for this: First, on the surface, it is more difficult to describe because it often involved an eclectic and uncomfortable exploration of alternative positions and methods. Second, its texts are difficult to locate; they appeared in the Centre's working papers and later in its journal—which was and still is largely unavailable outside of England—and only some of this work has been reprinted subsequently in various collections. The result is that the different positions embodied within them have been glossed over as they are assimilated into later, more explicit positions. Yet it is a crucial period for, although many of its early theoretical formu-

lations were soon abandoned, it did open up new spaces and shifted the grounds of cultural studies in ways that continue to be influential. It won important new positions even if, occasionally, it also gave up some positions that would have to be reappropriated later in different forms. Moreover it is during this phase that the Centre begins to explore truly collective forms of research; the first such effort was an attempt, in 1969, to read a short story, "Cure for Marriage," from a "woman's magazine."

Moving from questions of the actual history of the Centre, the position that emerged can be seen as a retheorization of the work of Raymond Williams. Two significant developments mark this early formation, and they roughly correspond to Williams's two major conceptualizations of culture: the structure of feeling (as the object of interpretation and the content of community) and the community of process (as the social process of community and communication). Thus, on the one hand, there was an attempt to find broader and more "scientifically" grounded or at least methodologically rigorous procedures for literary and cultural readings. Stylistic analysis, rhetoric, and semiotics/structuralism were all added onto the agenda of cultural studies as alternatives to the empiricism, elitism, and verbal bias of traditional literary studies. It was, in the final instance, semiotics and structuralism that had an enduring impact, not only methodologically but theoretically as well. On the other hand, reading in sociology and anthropology led the Centre increasingly into phenomenological sociology, not in its individualist forms but rather as a dialectical theory of intersubjectivity: "The question is . . . how subjective meanings and intentions come, under certain determinate conditions, to create and inform the 'structures' of social life? And how, in turn, the structures of social life shape and inform the interior spaces of individual consciousness" (Hall 1971, 98). By refusing to identify public and subjective meanings, cultural studies avoided the mechanism of traditional marxism; by refusing to identify situated social meanings and culture, it avoided the idealism of phenomenology and existential sociology. The question of cultural studies had to be understood dialectically: how people fill the void between inadequate collective representations and imperfect private meanings. "[B]y what 'mediations' do the subjective meanings of actors, who share a common social world, become expressed or 'objectivated' in cultural artifacts, in social gesture and interactions" (Centre 1966–67, 29). Intersubjectivity was the key mediating term between individual experiences and social structures. The problem for cultural studies was to find an adequate model of the processes of mediation by which "structures of meaning" came to move within the spaces

of cultural texts, understood increasingly on a model of communication as the intersubjective construction of meaning (see, e.g., "The Social Eye of the Picture Post" [Hall 1972] and such early studies as *Paper Voices* [A. C. H. Smith 1975]). The focus on a theoretically constituted process of communication helped to dismantle the privileging of art, so common in Williams and Hoggart.

Despite the eclecticism of this period, the terrain of cultural studies was radically reorganized.<sup>3</sup> While much of the interpretive work was still based in an empiricist epistemology, it was increasingly a structural (or semiotic) empiricism, grounded in the reading of the structures and systems by which meanings are organized. It also moved beyond Hoggart's essentialism, which seemed to postulate a direct correspondence between culture and society. This first "Centre position" emphasized the necessary mediations between culture and society, the complex dialectic between the individual and society. That dialectic was given shape as the process of communication—an inherently "social form of Praxis" (Sartre)—as the relations between public and private meanings, or between personal and collective realities (the latter defined as "publicly routinised social existence").

Perhaps most importantly, this dialectical sociology took the emphasis away from the agency of the individual and increasingly located historical agency within the realm of intersubjective meaning, of the socially positioned subject. This does not mean that it abandoned a notion of an essentially creative human subject! But it did transform the structure of its humanism, increasingly defined less by the literary pull of Hoggart than by a "sociological" pull (Allor 1987). If the model of the social formation it offered continued to be defined as a class structure, that was given an increasingly marxist reading. But the cultural formation was significantly reenvisioned, not as a structure of the conflict between the people and the dominant elite, but as a processual totality produced through the ongoing processes and structures of social communication. Thus while it continued to locate modernity within the mass media (and to offer itself as an alternative to mass communication theory), it significantly rethought the site of cultural power and struggle. The specificity of cultural studies was located in the realm of intersubjective meaning (which mediated between culture and society) or, in what became the increasingly common term, ideology. The Centre, even in its earliest formations, argued against reflectionist and reductionist notions of ideology in favor of an effort to understand it as the construction of a consen-

sual worldview: cultural power as consent, cultural struggle as the opposition of competing, sociologically locatable structures of meaning.

In this way, a cultural theory of communication was transformed into a communicational theory of culture which redirected the focus of cultural studies onto questions of shared meanings, participation within a community, and the ideological mediations between social position, the production of meaning, and experience. If culture was bifurcated into the relations between texts and lived reality, the former was defined by intersubjective meanings, the latter by socially determined experience. But this recognition of cultural complexity and competition (which in many ways reproduced aspects of Williams's work) did not, however, provide cultural studies with the grounds for theorizing the notion of struggle or even resistance. For it moved from a real recognition of complexity (or what Hall would later call difference) to notions of competing interests, overlapping structures of meaning, and negotiated compromises.

If this position as I have described it was dominated by the phenomenological reconceptualization of culture and communication, the increasing interest in semiotics and structuralism pointed in a radically different direction. For semiotics presented a different model of culture; in the work of Eco and Barthes, the Centre was drawn into a discourse that thought of communication as a formal process rather than a sociological one. The semiotic notions of encoding and decoding (Hall 1980b) as two points in a purely signifying structure increasingly forced cultural studies to recognize the implications of a concept of difference; it challenged the assumption of intersubjectivity (and the assumed existence of shared codes). An increasing attention to the texts of Marx (especially the *Grundrisse* and the "Notes on Method," in Hall 1974) and the beginnings of the Centre's efforts to read and argue with Althusser reinforced the possibility of a semiotic theory of culture which, by denying any unified consensus, would provide the theoretical grounds for the possibility of resistance.

#### THE CULTURALIST FORMATION

The position most commonly identified with the Centre emerged in the mid-seventies through the interaction of two fairly coherent and isolated bodies of work: the first focused on the study of youth subcultures; the second offered a model of media communication built upon the disjunction between encoding and decoding. It is important, however, to recognize the historical de-

velopments through which these researches were brought together into a theory of the complex relations between power and resistance. The theory of resistance in media developed from the purely semiotic theory of resistant decoding positionalities. While this formal theory had recognized that such positions were related to institutional and social determinants (drawing upon the work of Parkin [1971] and Mann [1973]), they remained abstract possibilities in the relations of power rather than interpretive positions. It was not until these positions were assigned sociological embodiments—that is, correlated with empirically identifiable audiences and social groups that could be characterized sociologically (Morley 1980)—that the Centre was able to argue that the working class had not been fully incorporated into the dominant culture. Subcultural theory, which is often taken as the primary example of the Centre's theory of resistance, actually began as part of the Centre's effort to define a phenomenological theory of society and culture. Using ethnography, this body of work opposed the "labeling theory" of the sociology of deviance with the argument that style was an ideological discourse (Willis 1978). It attempted to place the question of meaning—and the construction of deviant identities—into the broader context of specific social and cultural formations. The theory of resistance, so brilliantly articulated in the first chapter of *Resistance through Ritual* (Clarke et al., 1975), was, in fact, written after the actual work of the "subculture group." However, we must at least acknowledge the diversity that existed within each of these traditions: not only across different authors, but over time (as new ideas were engaged), positions differed (e.g., there are significant differences between the sub-cultural work of Clarke, Willis, Jefferson, and Hebdige).

It was Hall's article (1980b) "Two Paradigms" that partly helped to cement these two bodies of work into an apparently consistent theoretical space, located between Williams's culturalism and Althusser's structuralism. Hall's article can be read in fact as a retrospective effort to reinterpret the debate between humanism and structuralism from the perspective of a third, cultural studies position, which already saw itself as inhabiting the space between them. It was less a call than a self-representation. Hall argued that Williams's theory assumed a too harmonious and well-structured social totality in which everything fit together. While it allowed for resistance, located in the human subject, it had difficulty accounting for domination. And, most importantly, it explained ideology (and its mystificatory effects) by measuring it against reality understood experientially. Experience was available

apart from ideology, and the struggle over ideology was then how those experiences were interpreted.

Structuralism, on the other hand, in the work of Althusser (and his followers) assumed a structure built upon difference, but the differences too easily became autonomous as the relations among the different levels were deferred in to a mystical last instance that never came. While it explained domination (in its theory of social reproduction), it offered no space for resistance (not as a result of its antihumanism but in its failure to explore the connections between the socioeconomic and cultural relations of ideology—embodied in the gap between the two halves of the "ideological state apparatuses" essay). And finally, structuralism explained experience as the product of ideology. There is no reality outside of ideology to which one can refer it—except of course for the possibility of a discourse (a science) that is not ideological. Ideology, then, is not false consciousness; rather it is a necessary mystification that represents "the way in which we live our imaginary relations to our real conditions of existence." The struggle is not over the interpretation of experiences but rather over the systems of representation that construct the experiences. Moreover, the most important (if not, in the end, the only) process by which ideology works is that of interpellation: ideological practices, by positioning the individual within discourse, define their subjectivity.

Thus what has often been taken as a theory of ideological resistance was, in many ways, an attempt to reinsert ideology into a broader, albeit historically specific cultural formation and that, in turn, into the real social, economic, and historical relations within which both subcultures and audiences were located. Following Hall's terms, I will begin by briefly suggesting where and how the Centre's position negotiated between culturalism and structuralism. The Centre maintained a basically humanistic conception of culture as "the way social categories and meanings mediate social processes between individuals and groups" (Centre 1972–74, 2): "We understand the word 'culture' to refer to that level at which social groups develop distinct patterns of life, and give *expressive form* to their social and material life-experience. Culture is the way, the forms, in which groups 'handle' the raw material of their social and material existence . . . The 'culture' of a group or class is the peculiar and distinctive 'way of life' . . . Culture is the distinctive shapes in which this material and social organisation of life expresses itself" (Clarke et al. 1975, 9).

And yet, while locating ideology within culture, they gave it a decidedly

Althusserian reading, recognizing that “men live, in ideology, an ‘imaginary relation’ to the real conditions of their existence” (Clarke et al. 1975, 33). Ideologies could serve as a form of resistance not because of some authentic “experience” behind it, but precisely because it offered “ways of expressing and realising in their culture their subordinate position and experiences” (12). Their experience is constructed as the dominant ideology’s imaginary relations, and, at the same time, that very production of subordinate experiences opens up the possibility of expressions that resist the dominant ideology. The notion of consensus provided a common ground between the two positions: ideological domination (or “hegemony”) “prescribes . . . the *limits* within which ideas and conflicts move and are resolved” (39). But the ideological construction of identity was rehumanized: ideology constructs identities by giving meanings to the various social differences and roles that are a part of our real conditions.

This view of the relationship between culture and ideology was itself located in a decidedly Althusserian image of the social formation within which cultures and ideologies are “relatively autonomous”: “subcultures represent a necessary . . . but *inter-mediary* level of analysis. Any attempt to relate subcultures to the ‘socio-cultural formation as a whole’ must grasp its complex unity by way of these necessary differentiations” (Clarke et al. 1975, 15). Thus culture was “doubly articulated” (Centre 1972–74, 2), first, to its own specificity and second, to “the inextricable inter-connections of culture with social structures, historical trends, social relationships between groups and classes, institutions” (2). Not only did this position incorporate images of the structured complexity and historical specificity of social and cultural formations, it also emphasized the complex processes of overdetermination through which possibilities for resistance were enabled because the correspondences between the various levels of any formation were never guaranteed or predetermined. And yet at the same time that it appropriated “Althusserian” ways of talking about ideology and the social formation, its description of culture and experience remained decidedly humanistic, emphasizing their mediating role between social position and cultural interpretations, resources, and competencies.

It is this gap that defined the particular view the Centre took of the possibilities and forms of resistance. In both subcultural studies and encoding/decoding, a specific group was isolated, its identity defined by its place within an objective set of social relations. These real relations corresponded, on the one hand, to a social identity constructed by socially defined differences and,

on the other hand, to a set of experiences. It was this identity that largely defined the site of ideological struggle, in the ways these differential experiences were themselves constructed within the ideological imaginary and hence experienced. That is, the identity of any group was doubly connected to experience, or rather the meaning of “experience” itself slides between two senses: that which is immediately and objectively determined by social position, and that which, through ideological interpretation, is how people live those relations. For example, when subculturalists talk about style as a “magical response” to the lived contradictions of a particular overdetermined social group, that contradiction is always ambiguously located in both the real relations and in lived experience. The style has to appear as a “magical” solution because it is, at least in the first instance, clearly within the lived (the imaginary) and has no necessary (and certainly no direct) connection to the real relations. It is a form of resistance precisely because the identity it constructs is “forbidden,” outside the hegemonic limits of the dominant ideology. The connection between its resistance and its “responsiveness” to the lived contradictions, like that between the two senses of experience, depends upon the assumption of a structural correspondence—or homology—between the various levels of the subculture’s existence. The contradictions acted out in a subcultural style are always determined elsewhere. Thus the correspondence between position, identity, and experience is not, at least theoretically, necessarily given (Althusser). Yet, in practice, whether homologies were understood as repeated commitments and images, structures of meaning, or signifying practices, they were always delivered in advance. The correspondence between the two levels of experience had to be assumed if experience was to effectively mediate between the larger terrains of culture and society.

The construction I have offered of this crucial moment in the formation of cultural studies focuses on the Centre’s continued engagement with Althusser and the various post-Althusserians (Hall 1985a) through an increasing appropriation of Gramscian formulations. Cultural studies’ concern for the specificity of ideological practices (operating within a hegemonic relation of consensus and incorporation) was explicitly opposed to the structuralist concern for the specificity of signifying practices. The Centre sought to study the *relative* autonomy of culture within historically specific social formations as an alternative to the structuralist tendency to give cultural practices an absolute autonomy and to ground them in universal textual and psychoanalytical processes. If, for structuralists, subjectivity is constitutive of ideology, cultural studies argued that ideology constitutes subjects. Rather than looking at

how subjects are positioned within the discursive production of meaning, cultural studies raised the question of social identity as part of the larger social struggle over meanings. The subject was assumed to exist outside any specific ideological event, defined by its place within systems of social differences. The question is where the lines of difference are located, and how people and meanings are assigned to them. The subject comes to ideology, already positioned (outside of discourse), as a potential site of struggle and as the active source of meaning production.

Let me briefly summarize the various positions the Centre tried to occupy and unite within the terrain of cultural studies during this phase. Its interpretive position had become increasingly structuralist and conventionalist. Not only were cultures to be read formally (not only in terms of shared structures but also in terms of such formal notions as modes of address and ideological problematics), but such formal mediations were always operative, even in the critical act itself. There was no science of ideology critique, and no guaranteed political position outside the processes of ideological maps of meanings. Thus, through a detour into structuralism, cultural studies reaffirmed a conventionalism that dominated much of humanistic marxism. Its theory of determination was, as I have already suggested, more the result of an uncomfortable tension. While its Althusserian theory of relative autonomy and overdetermination placed an increasing emphasis on difference, on the lack of necessary correspondences, its desire to escape the extreme denials of any historical correspondences, and its theory of homologies, reinscribed a systemic essentialism of structural correspondences that were always guaranteed in practice. It continued the sociological pull of the earlier theory, but challenged its easy assumption of social totality, favoring Althusser's notion of a structure in dominance, coupled with Williams's distinction (1973) between residual, emergent, and dominant formations (the former two could exist in harmonious, negotiated, or oppositional relation to the latter).

The increasing possibilities of constructing social difference (through decoding and appropriation) suggested, however, a different model of the cultural formation, one built upon the radical separation, however temporary, between the center and the margins. Thus while it was able to locate moments of resistance (however fragmented and imaginary), the resistance of difference (in subcultural theory) was always linked to a moment of authenticity which was threatened by a hegemonic incorporation of the margins into the center, a process that apparently guaranteed the co-optation of resistance. By locating the site of resistance within consumption, this position transformed

the problem of modernity into one of consumption itself: on the one hand, the new possibilities that consumption appeared to offer and, on the other, the rapidly increasing rate at which cultural practices and social groups were incorporated into the hegemonic formation. Finally, the Centre's position, despite its distinction between culture and ideology, continued and even furthered the identification of the problematic of cultural studies with that of ideology; ideology, however, was no longer referred directly to a coherent worldview but rather to the production of social identity and experience around real sociological differences.

But this view of the Centre's position, accurate as it may be, underplays the growing importance of Gramsci throughout this phase of the formation. Gramsci was continuously reread, first as a humanist, then as an alternative form of engaging with Althusser's theoreticism (in his theorizations of historical specificity, relative autonomy, and hegemony) and Poulantzas (on the state, class, and mode of production). His influence was felt not only in the broad theory of ideology and social formations, but in the emerging working groups on the state, race relations, and so on. The first real sign of the increasing pull of Gramsci was the collective work that led to the publication of *Policing the Crisis* (Hall et al. 1978), which, although still decidedly Althusserian in its view of ideology and the social formation, began to offer a different view of the relationship of culture to the historical conjuncture. While not yet able to theorize the conjuncture—*Policing the Crisis* began with the conjuncture already defined by the collapse of social democracy—it represented an important shift away from the communicational or transactional model of culture (defined either semiotically or intersubjectively) to a more historical and “structural” (not structuralist) theory:

There are, we argue, clear historical and structural forces at work in this period, shaping, so to speak, from the outside, the immediate transactions on the ground between “muggers,” potential muggers, their victims and their apprehenders. In many comparable studies, these larger and wider forces are merely noted and cited; their direct and indirect bearing on the phenomenon analysed is, however, left vague and abstract—part of “the background.” In our case, we believe that these so-called “background issues” are, indeed, exactly the critical forces which *produce* “mugging” in the specific form in which it appears . . . It is to this shaping context, therefore, that we turn: attempting to make precise, without simplification or reduction, the other contradictory connections between

specific events of a criminal-and-control kind, and the historical conjuncture in which they appear." (185)

While *Policing* continued the focus on social identity through the construction of the meaning of social differences, it recognized that identity itself is structured in contradictions. As it began to move away from the subjective interpretations of texts and the experiential dimension of ideology, it placed a greater emphasis on popular languages and common sense, on the construction of a field of meanings and differences that is linked, on the one hand, to hegemonic projects and, on the other, to certain conditions of possibility. Although in many ways it remained with the cultural studies position that I have described, it represented an important vector pointing to other possibilities.

#### A STRUCTURAL-CONJUNCTURALIST FORMATION\*

While the normative history of cultural studies sees Gramsci as offering a new and different way of occupying the middle ground, of limiting the tendencies of structuralism without falling back into humanism, I want to suggest that the (re)turn to Gramsci significantly rearticulated the commitments of cultural studies and shifted the very problematic that constituted its identity. Rather than occupying a middle ground, the position changes the rules of the game; it shifts the discourse of cultural studies in fundamental ways, opening it up to new questions of differences. Obviously, Gramsci's impact cannot be understood in isolation: there were historical and political pressures (both from within and from outside of the Centre), and there were other significant intellectual forces, including Foucault. Most especially, feminism challenged many of the intellectual and political assumptions of cultural studies. It offered, among other things, its own radical critique of essentialism and its own theory of difference even while it placed the problem of identity back onto the cultural studies agenda.

Perhaps the simplest way to present the radical implications of the theoretical shift into a "conjuncturalist" cultural studies is to describe the particular ways it responds to the eight questions that have, if only summarily, structured my presentation of earlier moments in this formation of cultural studies. "Conjuncturalism" can be seen as a model of "determinateness" which attempts to avoid the twin errors of essentialist theories of determination: necessary correspondences and necessary noncorrespondences. Both of these alternatives are reductionist: they assume that history is guaranteed, even if it is only its indifference or indeterminacy that is guaranteed. Conjuncturalism

argues that while there are no necessary correspondences (relations), there are always real (effective) correspondences. The meaning, effects, and politics of particular social events, texts, practices, and structures (what we in fact mean by their "identity") are never guaranteed, either causally (by their origins, however deferred) or through inscription (as if they were self-determined). Thus while conjuncturalism follows the poststructuralist emphasis on difference and the need to deconstruct identity (so as to deny its essentiality and necessity), it follows feminist theory in arguing for the additional critical task of reconstructing the historical context within which the production of a particular identity has been accomplished. Only in this dual task can one understand both the reality of such productions and the possibilities for change. In conjuncturalism, the anti-essentialism of a theory of difference is not defined by its opposition to a theory of identity, but rather by its reinterpretation of the latter as a theory of specificity. The specificity of any conjuncture, at whatever level of abstraction, is always produced, determinate.

Its theory of agency can be condensed into the notion of "articulation" as an interpretation of Marx's statement that "people make history but in conditions not of their own making." The links that seem to give a particular text (or set of texts) a particular effective meaning, that connect it with a particular social group and political position, are forged by people operating within the limits of their real conditions and the historically articulated "tendential lines of force." Articulation refers to the ongoing construction of unstable (to varying degrees) relations between practices and structures. It involves the production of contexts, the ongoing effort by which particular practices are removed from and inserted into different structures of relationships, the construction of one set of relations out of another, the continuous struggle to reposition practices within a shifting field of forces. Yet neither the elements nor the context can be adequately described outside of the relations; neither can be taken to preexist the other. Texts are not added onto already existing contexts (intertexts); rather texts and contexts are articulated to each other, each inserted into the other, as it were. In fact, the difference between a text and its context, or a practice and a structure, is only a product of the level of abstraction at which one is operating and, often, the history of common sense (e.g., the fact that a narrative, or an author's name, or, at another level, the binding, is often taken to delimit a "text" is a deeply rooted part of our taken-for-granted assumptions).

A theory of articulation denies an essential human subject without giving

up the active individual who is never entirely and simply "stitched" into its place in social organizations of power. Individuals and social groups can and do make history, not because of some essential creativity (or impulse to resistance), nor because they are determined by their historical, social, and cultural positions. Positions are won and lost, occupied and evacuated. There are always a multiplicity of positions, not only available but occupied, and a multiplicity of ways in which different meanings, experiences, powers, interests, and identities can be articulated together. The historical individual is itself the site of ongoing struggles and articulations. Still, this is always a socially defined individual, constituted by its location within already inscribed systems of difference. It begins with the givenness of sociological difference, around which articulations are organized. But perhaps its most important implication is its anti-elitism. It says that people are always active; we cannot predict or prejudice where their practices will operate in some way against particular historical tendencies. Nor can we predict, in those situations where there is a struggle between competing articulations, who will win or what such a victory will ultimately signify. While it is au courant to affirm that "people are not (cultural) dopes," its radical implications, both politically and analytically, are rarely taken seriously.

While conjuncturalism seems to describe the social formation, following Althusser as a "structure in dominance," it demands that the very concept, as well as any specific conjuncture, be historicized and therefore problematized. Not only does it reject that the structural totality is guaranteed, in either the first or last instances (as if somehow the economic always comes through for us), it also rejects the model of levels, each of whose specificity (relative autonomy) can be located outside of specific conjunctures. Of course, critics often do—and must—operate on different levels of abstraction, but specificity is always historically articulated. Furthermore, there are no guarantees concerning what levels, or even how many, are active in what ways, at any moment. Any level (e.g., the political, the ideological, the economic), to the extent that it is a useful concept, must be seen as both internally and externally articulated, full of differences and contradictions. Thus, rather than a totality in difference, we might talk instead about a fractured or articulated totality, in order to emphasize that how the totality breaks up—where its lines of fissure are, where it is stitched together, how its "teeth-gritting harmony" is constructed—is unpredictable in advance, never guaranteed, even though our theories might like it better the other way.

The conjuncturalist theory of the cultural formation significantly relocates

both the problematic of cultural studies and the line between culture and society. Because it recognizes the complexity of the terrain of culture, models of elite/mass, public/private, and even center/margin are seen as specific historical—and politically inflected—descriptions. It is necessary then to turn to a more abstract description: dominant and popular, where the popular is always defined by and as its difference from, its subordination to, the dominant culture; this, in some sense, guarantees to the popular at least the possibility of resistance. But the abstractness of this structure is only a result of its decontextualized appearance here; specific relations will always demand a recognition of the different ways in which relations of dominant and popular cultures are constructed.

Conjuncturalism describes cultural relations within a discourse of power—a discourse of domination and subordination which sees people living in complex and changing networks of social relations. Consequently they are implicated, often in contradictory ways, in differential and hierarchical relations of power. Even at their most concrete, relations of power are always multiple and contradictory. Wherever people and practices are organized around particular contradictions, there are multiple, differential relations of power involved. State power, economic power, sexual and gender power, racial power, class power, national power, ethnic power, age power, and so on—all are potentially active at various points in the social formation as a "unity-in-difference," and, at any point, they may operate in different relations to each other as well. If there are no guarantees that the elimination of class domination and exploitation will eliminate sexual and gender domination and exploitation, there is also no guarantee that the latter will carry the former with it. A conjunctural theory of power is not claiming, however, that all such relations of power are equal, equally determining, or equally livable; these are questions that depend upon the analysis of the specific, concrete conjuncture. This theory of power has a number of consequences: First, the form of such cultural relations must always be analyzed conjuncturally; second, to be in either a dominant or subordinate position—whether at a specific historical site or within a more dispersed (but still articulated) social structure—involves a complex and determinate set of relations that are often contradictory not only internally but also in their relations with other social positions and structures; and third, both domination and subordination are always actively lived. And the active practice of living one's subordinate position need not always merely reproduce or even accept the dominant articulations of that positioning. Thus conjuncturalism makes explicit what



remained implicit in earlier forms of cultural studies: that there are multiple forms of resistance as well as of power.

Before turning to how this conjuncturalist version of cultural studies understands the specificity of the cultural and of its historical conjuncture, let me (re)turn to the question of its epistemology and interpretive practice. Conjuncturalism eschews the conventionalism of culturalism in favor of a revised realism. Hall's reinvocation (1976) of Benjamin's image of the materialist—as a surgeon cutting into the real—as opposed to the empiricist—as a magician laying hands upon the surface—indicates a renewed effort to take seriously the constraint of historically and materially constituted realities (at least in the form of tendential forces, which are not the same as discursive “realisms”): There is a world that has to be made to mean! The fact that one can only make the real intelligible through ideological forms need not negate their difference, nor the effectivity of the real. Ideologies articulate real practices, positions, and relations; they do not invent them, nor do they render them irrelevant or undecidable. There is as well a particular interpretive strategy operating, one that is different from those by which the previously described form of cultural studies attempts to uncover practices of appropriation and resistance. The task is a contextualist one: not merely to try to identify the objective context into which a particular text is inserted, but to (re)construct the context—which can never be centered around any single text or practice—of a particular (e.g., ideological) field, in terms of how it is articulated, both internally and externally, into specific relations. That construction is always the site of contradiction and struggle. Interpretation involves mapping out the determinations that, *to varying degrees*, are actively producing the context, defining its specificity. But this can only be accomplished if the critic is constantly aware of the different “levels of abstraction”—the distances from the specific context one is interested in—on which determinations are operating. For example, Marx's description of the structure of capitalism in *Das Kapital* describes real historical determinations, but they are located at a high level of abstraction, far removed from the specificity of late capitalism in the 1980s. Within such a contextualist practice, the “depth” of the context is understood largely in epistemological terms. And consequently there always remains some distance between the political and the epistemological measures of completing theories and articulations.

We are now in a position to understand the “double articulation” of ideology as a way of moving beyond the methodological oppositions that structured previous forms of cultural studies—between encoding and decoding,

or between a textualist-idealist problematic (its literary pull) and a social-materialist problematic (its sociological pull). Within conjuncturalism, the question of ideology is how a particular text articulates a specific signifier as part of common sense and the production of experience. Ideology, as discourse, first involves an internal articulation: what meaning is produced depends upon where and how particular discursive practices and forms are inserted into larger “intertextual” relations. Power is already operating here since struggles over how texts are interpreted can always be located within such competing articulations. Texts must not only be made to mean, but there are struggles over that production, struggles to achieve, maintain, and change the commonsense alignments and formations of discourse. Within the plane of signifying effects, other effects are produced and struggled over as well: particular subject-positions are offered, but these do not come in already-guaranteed relations to either signifying practices or particular structures of meaning. The ways in which meanings and subject-positions are linked is yet another site of articulation. Further, neither meaning nor subject-positions, once produced, guarantee how such an articulation will itself be articulated to other practices—in particular, to the real conditions of existence. If reality is not textual, it has to be “represented” as well as signified. Thus ideological struggles involve a second articulation, a second plane of effects, in which meanings are articulated to real social practices, relations, and conditions. Differences, which may be constructed elsewhere (e.g., in textual, psychoanalytic, or economic relations), are linked, through meanings, to social positions and to socially empowered systems of connotation. If such articulations are to be put into place, the connections have to be made apparent, real, natural, inevitable. Only in that way can they become “common sense,” and only through that double articulation do ideological articulations come to constitute the ways we live our relations to the real (i.e., to produce experience). Difference, interpellation, connotation—wherever they are actively produced—are articulated together around the ideological production of representational effects. Cultural studies now looks at how it is that particular texts, practices, identities already appear to be interpreted, their politics predefined, while acknowledging that this appearance is always in part illusory because it is never guaranteed. People are always struggling against the pre-constructed articulations (both internal and external, both signifying and representational), looking for the openings, the weak links, that allow them to bend texts and practices into their own lives. Of course, the points at which this double articulation is successful, at which an ideology is offered and

potentially becomes dominant, can themselves come to define tendential forces. The victories, however temporary and contradictory, leave their traces upon the social and cultural formations, contributing to the real historical tendencies that define the conditions under which further articulation is both necessary and possible.

There is a common misreading of the conjuncturalist form of cultural studies which assumes that it continues to define the problematic of cultural studies within the ideological (Johnson 1986–87). This ignores the fact that the project of cultural specificity must be located within the demand for historical specificity. Cultural studies is concerned with the intersection of discourse (the place of the articulation of meaning and representation and subjectivity), power, and *civil society* as discussed by Gramsci. It is the historical appearance of civil society—as the domain within which notions of freedom, privacy, the absence of force are assumed—that defines the specificity of cultural studies. It is in this context that Hall's theory of hegemony (1986a, 1986c) makes sense within cultural studies: hegemony is *more* than ideological and different from the production of consensus; it involves the ways in which a specific alliance of class fractions is able to assume the position of economic and political leadership. One cannot analyze hegemony on this model in purely ideological terms, for although it is constructed partly through ideological work, it is also connected to economic and political struggles (although these have to be represented in ideology); it may even implicate forms of repressive force at moments. A hegemonic project or victory does not demand the production of a consensus (for common sense is often contradictory and fragmentary), nor a process of incorporation (for hegemony produces its own positions of both subordination and resistance). It does operate through the production of a certain convergence of interests through which subordination and resistance are contained. But containment is not the same as incorporation (although this may be a local strategy in specific struggles) since it involves a negotiation with subordinate and resistant fractions which may restructure the dominant as well as the subordinate interests. Hegemony seeks to win a position of leadership; it demands consent and need only contain (not eliminate) opposition. It must articulate itself, in particular ways, to both the common sense of the people and the political, economic, and ideological institutions of the society. A hegemonic bloc only needs to win popular assent to their position, to their conception of a crisis that demands a far-ranging solution, not to their specific ideological representations; it can allow for complex differences in what ideological ar-

ticulations are taken up, and how. Moreover the struggle to construct hegemony is never a simple and singular one; it requires a national project that is articulated across the broad range of activities and institutions that make up civil society.

But I do not mean to argue that hegemony defines the specificity of cultural studies. For while there is a tendency to equate hegemony with the ongoing and omnipresent struggle for power within civil society, I want to follow Hall in restricting it to a description of a particular historically constructed structure of power. In that sense, hegemony defines not the specificity of cultural studies but rather a conjuncturalist conception of the locus of historical specificity. On this reading, it has been argued that Gramsci was concerned with the question of Italian hegemony because Italy had yet to achieve it (and the closest it had come was the moment of fascism). Hegemony is a historically emergent struggle for power called into existence by the appearance of the masses on the political and cultural scene of civil society. The masses are not identifiable with any of the usual divisions of power in society; they cut across class, gender, race, age, and so on. They are in fact only defined by their place within civil society and within the hegemonic struggle to win a position of leadership in the contemporary world of advanced capitalist, democratic societies.

#### A POSTMODERN CONJUNCTURALISM

Hegemony is one possible response to the historical context of modernity, to the broader historical conditions of the appearance of the masses as, in the first instance, a new form of cultural agency that is articulated into various political and economic positions. The close connection between the emergence of contemporary forms of mass cultural dissemination and the complex (re)articulation of historical agency (in which the masses are both the subject and object of the contemporary forms of power of late capitalism) is precisely the point at which a conjuncturalist form of cultural studies intersects with the postmodern turn (for cultural studies, it is a return) to the problematic of mass communication. Thus, to conclude my survey of the different forms within this specifically marxist formation, I want to point to the emergence of another position, one that is more difficult to define because it is a relatively recent and as yet unsystematized position, and because there are significant differences among its proponents (e.g., Hebdige [1987, 1988], and Chambers [1986] pull it back into the previous position, while Chambers simultaneously propels it into a postmodern position; McRobbie [1986] and

Morris [1988a, 1988b] link it in important ways to developments in feminism; while Grossberg [1988b] and Ross [1989] tend to emphasize its relation to the contemporary American political context). Consequently my attempt to present the commitments of this version of cultural studies will be more self-consciously an attempt to "fabricate" the position, following its own project of negating the epistemological concern: truth is itself an effect of power and history. The key difference between the two versions of conjuncturalism is that the postmodern form refuses to privilege difference, to assume its reality or effectivity. On this view, it is possible for differences not to make a difference; their existence (i.e., their effectivity) is itself the historical product of their articulation. Rather than confronting continuously self-reproducing discourses of otherness, postmodern cultural studies attempts to rearticulate the increasingly transnational context of (post)modernity.

As a model of interpretation, postmodern conjuncturalism emphasizes its own articulation of the conjuncture it analyzes; it cannot ignore its own reflexive position within it. Consequently the voice of the critic becomes determining (e.g., the emergence of first-person ethnographies in which the researcher, as a member of the culture, becomes his or her own native informant). We can draw upon Foucault's notion (1978b, 1979a) of "apparatuses" as heterogeneous ensembles of practices or events to describe the object of such postmodern cultural studies. Reality is not defined as a metaphysical or even a historical origin but rather as an interested mapping of the lines of concrete effects. Reality is not "outside" of any apparatus, merely represented within the discourses comprising it. This assumed difference between discourse and reality gives rise to the epistemological problem. But if reality is always articulated through our own fabrication of it, one cannot define the specificity (the difference) of any practice or conjuncture apart from its ongoing articulation within the history of our constructions. Reality is always a construction of and out of the complex intersections and interdeterminations among specific conjunctural effects. Reality in whatever form—as matter, as history, or as experience—is not a privileged referent but the ongoing (in Deleuze and Guattari's term, "rhizomatic" [1981]) production or articulation of apparatuses. And the only grounds for deciding, in Benjamin's terms, how deeply and precisely one has cut into the body of the real are political and historical.

This model of articulation as the production of the real implies a slightly different theory of determination as well. For the construction of an apparatus can never remain within, nor locate the specificity of a particular practice

within, some small set of planes of effects. If reality is always constituted by the multiplicity of effects (e.g., the production and distribution of meanings, desires, representations, money, labor, capital, pleasures, moods, emotions, force), then one cannot, for very long, maintain any separation between the so-called levels of the social formation. Ideology (the double articulation of meaning and representational effects) is always in determinate relations with political and economic practices, but also with desiring-effects, mood-effects, and so on. These other planes of effects cannot be bracketed out, for they determine whether and how meanings and subject-positions are taken up, occupied, invested in, and possessed. There are no guarantees which practices are effectively determinate. For example, the commodification of discourse may have less of an effect on contemporary ideological struggles than other economic events and practices. While conjuncturalism continues to define culture (and discourse) through its articulation of meaning-effects (and secondarily, representational effects), discourse can, in particular apparatuses and to varying degrees, be articulated to other effects. In fact, its most powerful determinations within an apparatus may not even entail meanings or representations. Postmodern conjuncturalism opens up the fields of effects within which cultural studies operates. It does not begin by assuming that the question of the intersection of power and culture is defined by the ways in which texts articulate specific meanings and relations; instead it seeks to understand the text as and within a conjunctural assemblage determined by and determining its effectivity. That is, interpretation is always con-structural, (re-)producing the ways in which practices are positioned within and articulate a "unity-in-difference." This can be seen as a theoretical solution to a very real practical problem in contemporary cultural studies: What do you do when every event is potentially evidence, potentially determining, and, at the same time, changing too quickly to allow the comfortable leisure of academic criticism? It is also at least partially responsible for a new sense of interdisciplinarity that is slowly emerging in cultural studies.

The theory of articulation and effectivity undermines as well our ability to assume the differences within which subjectivity and identity are constituted. It challenges, then, the sociological pull of cultural studies which has located the subject within multiple social differences and their ideological articulations. The subject—as actor, audience, communicator, or agent—is itself a construction, the articulated and articulating movement within and between apparatuses. In postmodern cultural studies, agency is always articulated through and depending upon specific effects. For example, the ideo-

logically articulated subject has no necessary relationship to political agency. Such links have themselves to be constructed and taken up. Moreover the agent of articulation is always anonymous although articulation is carried out by real individuals and groups. This is merely to restate Marx's claim that while we make history, we are not in control of it. It is not merely a matter of unintended consequences, for that eliminates any question of agency; it is rather that practices are always actively contested, rearticulated, hijacked, detoured, and so on, that the relations between practices and effects do not follow preconstituted lines. Furthermore, as the above argument suggests, there is no necessary completeness of the subject that is required by the demands of agency: subjects can, in particular instances, be partial; on one level, the subject may be effective as a body (without consciousness) or even as a partial body; at another level, the complicitous subject may be defined in affective rather than ideological or material terms, and at still another level, whether, where, and how gendered identity is determinative within a particular apparatus (and not merely how that gender difference is articulated) is part of the active reality of the apparatus itself. This vision of "nomadic subjectivity" existing only within the movement of and between apparatuses rejects both the existential subject who has a single, unified identity and the deconstructed, permanently fragmented subject. Moreover it refuses to reduce the subject to either a psychoanalytic or a social-textual (ideological) production. The nomadic subject is constantly remade, reshaped as a mobile situated set of vectors in a fluid context. The subject remains the agent of articulation, the site of struggle within its own history, but the shape and effective nature of that subject is never guaranteed. The nomadic subject is amoebalike, struggling to win some space for itself in particular apparatuses (as historical formations). While its shape is always determined by its articulations, it always has an effective shape. Thus the possibilities of articulation depend in part on where and how the nomadic subject occupies its place(s) within a specific apparatus. Additionally it always inhabits numerous apparatuses simultaneously, which are themselves articulated to one another.

While the theory of the social formation remains the same in the two versions of conjuncturalism, their theories of power differ significantly. According to postmodern cultural studies, history is always the product of struggles that empower and disempower different practices and social positions in different ways. While the very articulation of relations and structures is the site of power, it is also the necessary shape of history. To deny structure is

merely a utopian dream of anarchy. Power is real and operates at every level of our lives, located in the limited production and unequal distribution of capital, money, meanings, identities, desires, emotions, and so forth. It shapes relations; structures differences; draws boundaries; delimits complexity; reduces contradictions to claims of unity, coherence, and homogeneity; organizes the multiplicity of concrete practices and effects into identities, unities, hierarchies, and apparent necessities (which ideologies seek to predefine, by closure and naturalization, retroactively). At its most concrete, power is the enablement of particular practices within specific relations; power is always empowering (one need not actively use power to be in an empowered position) and disempowering. Thus the notion of empowerment suggests the complexity of the empowering effects operating within any conjuncture. A practice may have multiple and even contradictory effects not only within a single (e.g., ideological) register, but across a range of different registers as well. Thus a particular articulation can be both empowering and disempowering; people can win something and lose something. Power can only be analyzed in its specific, conjuncturely articulated forms. This model of power is opposed to the various versions of postmodern resistance: it refuses to celebrate any local resistance as if it were desirable in itself; it refuses to accept that only the oppressed can speak or struggle for themselves; it refuses to see the aim of resistance as the reflexive production of the self (as if all power were "technologies of the self"); and it refuses to valorize hyperconformity as radical resistance. Instead it argues that resistance is produced out of people's ongoing activities within specific conjunctures, activities that may be motivated by and directed toward very disparate effects. But resistance itself is never sufficient; it must be articulated into opposition that is effective and progressive within specific formations of power.

Finally, I want to consider the last three questions—the cultural formation, the specificity of cultural struggle, and the site of modernity—together, for they constitute a postmodern conjuncturalist conception of the specificity of cultural studies. Let me begin by returning to the notion of hegemony as a particular structuration of social power that operates within civil society to place an alliance of class fractions in the leading position. The masses then need not consent to the particular values and directions of those occupying the leading position: they must merely be articulated into the position of willing followers. A part of this articulation obviously involves ideological work on what Gramsci called "common sense." Sometimes this is accomplished through the work of formal ideological institutions (involved in the

production of “philosophies”). Sometimes it involves the work of everyday cultural apparatuses—the sites of relaxation, privacy, pleasure, taste, enjoyment. But this suggests that there is a second vector within the production of hegemony, a vector Gramsci described as the production of a “national popular.” It is this determination of “the popular,” the articulation of *the popularity* of particular discourses that defines the focus of postmodern cultural studies. The repressed of culture studies (and it is still being repressed in the contemporary appropriation of the term), that which needs to be placed back on the agenda, is the specificity of, and struggles around, the popular. The denigration of popular discourses has a long history and it has been accomplished through a variety of strategies (e.g., from Plato, Augustine, and the Enlightenment to marxism and the neoconservatives); the popular is generally granted status only when it can be reclaimed to the operations of “art” or, perhaps, ideology.

At the same time, it is important to avoid locating the popular as if it were, somehow, always the other of a dominant (e.g., elite or central) culture, always the source of oppositional impulses. The dominant culture has its own forms of popularity, as do all class formations. The popular is historically articulated; it might be understood, initially at least, as those discursive forms and practices that necessarily (although only in part) function outside the signifying web. The popular is that which is always inscribed upon the body: tears, laughter, spine-chilling, screams, fright, erections, and so on. These visceral responses—which often seem beyond our conscious control—are the mark of the affective and libidinal work of the popular: it is “sentimental,” “emotional,” “moody,” “exciting,” “prurient,” “carnavalesque,” and more. These do not define some essential property of the popular, either formal-textual or responsive. Rather they describe the articulation of specific sorts of effects, the historically specific ways in which some practices are inserted into the apparatuses of everyday life. The popular, then, describes concrete, historically located “sensibilities” (Bourdieu); it is a matter of effectivity determined by the ways in which “popular objects” are taken up, invested in, and articulated.

Civil society, then, cannot be understood merely in terms of ideological articulations; it demands as well an acknowledgment of what cultural studies has *always* perceived: that the increasing power of the mass media is reshaping and redistributing the forms and positions of the popular (and consequently, of the masses) within contemporary life. It is here that we can locate the point at which cultural studies intersects not only the theory of ideology

and social power, but also mass communication theory and the various theories of postmodernity. Postmodern cultural studies returns to the questions that animated the original passion of cultural studies: What is the “modern” world? How do we locate ourselves as subjects within that world? How do our investments in that world provide the possibilities for regaining some sense of its possible futures?