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CONTEMPORARY CULTURAL STUDIES

An Approach to the Study of Literature and Society

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In one sense most if not all literature can be said to be engaged with its society. The statement seems virtually self-evident. But its implications are varied and complex; they differ from period to period and from country to country.

The literary tradition in Britain – especially in the two centuries since urbanisation, industrialisation and democratisation got under way – has had a distinctive record of direct and specific engagement with questions facing the society of its time. The engagement has been carried on both by creative writers and by critics, and often by men who were both. What Raymond Williams¹ has called the “culture and society debate” runs from Blake to T. S. Eliot through Coleridge, Arnold, Carlyle, Ruskin, Morris and many others. “Culture” there means the whole way of life of a society, its beliefs, attitudes and temper as expressed in all kinds of structures, rituals and gestures, as well as in the traditionally-defined forms of art. We are looking now, I should stress, not at the way such writers explored their society in their creative work, but at their direct, discursive engagement in questions of the day, in the analysis of the “quality of the life” of their culture.

When we do turn to British creative writing itself, we find again a characteristic tone of social and moral concern. This isn't to say that social and moral concern doesn't figure in American and European writers; obviously it does. It is to stress that the shape and pressure of this concern differ with different cultures. In England it shows most often as a kind of concrete, pragmatic, humane insistence. There is a long-standing belief, not much examined but powerful and shared by many writers, critics and serious general readers, that “good literature” offers a key to understanding societies better, a way of apprehending better their “moral life”. Here again, the line of specific statements by creative writers runs strongly from Blake through Wordsworth and George Eliot to D. H. Lawrence.² In the last few decades, it was best continued, in critical writing, by *Scrutiny*; and thence it moved out into English teaching at

all levels. By this tradition it is claimed that good literature can reveal a society to itself in unique ways if — and the proviso is very important — we learn how to read it properly and do not try to use it for external ends.³

Some critics have also, especially in the last thirty years, been willing to try to analyse the social and moral significance not just of "high literature" but of "low" literature or mass literature. Or they have tried to assess the cultural meanings of forms of mass art which are not simply verbal, such as advertising or film or popular music. Here one thinks again, for instance, of *Scrutiny*, of Mrs. Leavis's *Fiction and the Reading Public* and of a few brilliant essays by George Orwell. Orwell did not have time before he died to do much in this area, but he saw the possibilities.

What you say about trying to study our own customs from an anthropological point of view opens up a lot of fields of thought, but one thing to notice about ourselves is that people's habits etc. are formed not only by their upbringing and so forth but also very largely by books. I've often thought it would be very interesting to study the conventions etc. of books from an anthropological point of view. I don't know if you ever read Elmer Rice's *A Voyage to Purilia*. It contains a most interesting analysis of certain conventions — taken for granted and never even mentioned — existing in the ordinary film. It would be interesting and I believe valuable to work out the underlying beliefs and general imaginative background of a writer like Edgar Wallace.⁴

I have mentioned these main lines at the start so as to suggest the peculiar character and strength of the British tradition in literary-cultural thinking. It has tended to be above all concrete, to stick close to human beings and to the direct experience of literature; it has been on the whole non-aesthetic and non-abstract, not fond of making intellectual patterns, rather homely, decent and concerned.

Its limitations are the reverse of its strengths. In some respects it seems unintellectual, suspicious of ordering its own thoughts, wilfully amateurish, over-wary of "disciplines" or "methods". It has assumed more than it has proved, and has not always been willing to listen to people who ask for more evidence or a more logical line of argument.

It has tended to be rather parochial. I have mentioned the "culture and society debate" as it was carried on discursively by English creative writers throughout the nineteenth century. But the tradition of nineteenth century continental (and especially German) philosophical writing, which is addressed to similar questions, is little known to literary students in Britain.⁵ Yet it has a great deal in common with the English debate and, where it differs, is especially challenging. Max Weber, for instance, uses many of the skills of a literary critic, often brilliantly, sometimes in a way a literary critic will question; and he has a complex rigour in teasing at his definitions which is rarely seen in discursive writing about society by literary students.⁶

It is especially easy for literary people to be suspicious of some modern social-scientific work. Suspicious of its abstracting character, since our work stresses the particular, the individual, the unique. But this is one reason why the social sciences can be good for us. When put to the test by the generalising, "objective" disciplines of the social sciences our truths ought to be confirmed, or they are shakily held.

Yet we do in fact move out from particular instances and particular works into making general statements about society. We do it a great deal, most of us, and often rather cavalierly. We use large words (like "moral") and large concepts very easily. We have a number of large social and cultural assumptions at the back of our minds. Even further back, supporting the assumptions, we have a whole picture or patterned view of the nature of society and the place of literature within it. Thus we have largely undusted assumptions about the nature of elites or minorities, their roles in society, the ways in which their values are transmitted; or about relationships between class and cultivation and power and authority.

We tend, if we draw upon other disciplines at all, to use only those which are most immediately sympathetic to us or appear to be so, and then to use them selectively. We are quick to take off from a few particular instances into general rhetoric. We ought to have a more realistic sense of the cost of, the necessary rules for, such moves outwards; and the social sciences can help here. They wouldn't deny the genuinely new insights from literature; they could help us to grasp them better.

We insist, as I said earlier, that one has to learn to read works of literature in and for themselves; that only by doing this can we learn what they have to tell about society; and that what they tell is irreplaceable, available from no other source. I think all this is true. But I am struck by the contrast between the size of the assertions and the failure to do more than propound them as self-evident truths. It is as though we are talking to ourselves, to the converted, almost all the time. The relations of the fictions of literature to knowledge, to "truth", are fantastically complicated. In a sense they can never be conclusively demonstrated or "proved", but only experienced. Still, we could do more to help others to see just what we are claiming, to see better how the revelations of literature about society are brought to bear.

For instance, we use the word "significantly" frequently, as when we say that such-and-such a man has shown a "significant" movement or a "significant" detail about society. We say, again quite confidently, that a good writer "sees further", "sees representatively", "stands outside his society", conveys more "truth" about its nature and so on. Though all these claims may be true, they are harder to prove than most of us think, and are not proved or forwarded by assertion and re-assertion.⁷

When we examine popular literature, we retain our self-confidence by reversing our approach. We have claimed that "good" literature will only yield what it has to tell about society if it is read in and for itself, each work as a unique object; by contrast we assume that popular literature can be read in large generic groups, very quickly; and then boldly

generalised about. It is, after all, merely "symptomatic", we say. Hence we tend to use and abuse it; we oversimplify its relation to society and so fail to see what it can tell us about the nature of a culture, what symptoms it really indicates.

It follows that our views about the effects of good or bad literature on individuals and society tend to be large but under-nourished. We claim too quickly that both good and bad literature are in direct relationship to a society's moral condition, that good literature is an index to a society's health and a nourishment to it, and mass literature a sign of its corruption which will even further debase it. All this may be in some senses true but, if so, it is true in very complex ways. So again we could do with less assertion and more patient consideration. There is by now a good deal of social-scientific literature about effects. Most social scientists would agree that it doesn't get past, say, letter C in the alphabet of the problems. But at least it does get to letter C; so it would be as well, before we talk about effects, to go that distance with people from another discipline.⁸

The point again is that, though good literature may well be valuable in the ways I have just described, in the insights it offers and the moral growth it can prompt, all these things are harder to demonstrate, especially to people who aren't themselves professional students of literature, than we usually think. I do not believe that it is sufficient for us to reply that this is because such people are insensitive or because they "haven't learned to read a book properly". Often they do try to read the book with all the care it demands, and they do listen to us and they do seem as sensitive as we are. But still they can't quite make our great leaps; they still seem like leaps in the dark. We do not help them to understand what we are doing and saying by repeating the instructions or incantations in what has become a set of almost closed languages. Bad literature or mass literature or processed literature may be as corrupting as we often say. But we have not made the claim convincing even to sympathetic outsiders; and, whatever the effects of bad literature, we shan't ourselves know them for what they

are unless we read that literature with more care than we commonly give it. There is more to it, a good deal more, than most of us think.

If what I have said so far is right then two main developments need to be made by literary students who have a special interest in understanding their culture. They need to improve literary-cultural analysis in itself; and they need to make better links with other disciplines.

Everything must start with the experience of literature "in and for itself". Without that kind of attention to the uniqueness of the works, that constant concern for the integrity of their individual natures, we shall be led into premature pattern-making, genre-generalisation and structural type casting — all gained through some infidelity to the works themselves. There is a place, as I shall mention later, for ideal-type abstraction across a genre; but it is more limited than we think and should come fairly late.

We have to attend to the work as peculiarly itself if we are to show why we say, and what we mean when we say, that literature can make a unique contribution to the understanding of a culture. Then we have to learn how to move outwards into statements about the nature of the culture of a sort which can be discussed with other disciplines.

So the first task is to improve literary-cultural reading *in itself*, as a preparation for learning how to express its cultural meanings. At the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies we call this "reading for tone" and "reading for value". The phrases aren't satisfactory, but it is difficult to find better ones.

The first means trying to grasp as fully as possible the texture of the writing. It means paying attention in the first place to all sorts of elements in the language, to stress and lack of stress, to repetition and omission, to image, to ambiguity and so on.

It means moving from there to character, incident, plot and theme. All the time one has to keep in mind the three major elements in a work of literature: the aesthetic, the psychological and the cultural. Briefly, the first points to those characteristics which have been predominantly decided by aesthetic needs, by the work of art as a formal structure, a type of "fiction" or gratuitous "making". The psychological elements are those which seem pre-eminently to have been decided by the make-up of the particular individual who wrote that particular book. The cultural elements are those which seem chiefly to have been decided by the fact that this book was written in a certain kind of society at a certain period. But, of course, the first two elements are to some extent culturally conditioned; and none of them is strictly separable from the others.⁹

We have to make and then to justify "significant selection", the choice of what seem like "critical incidents". Otherwise, we will be making no difference between the relative pressures, convincingness and importance of different passages and scenes; and it is this dimension which is the first crucial gain from a full reading. Otherwise, one might just as well simply count references and recurrences, cross-tabulate and generally make elaborate quantitative manoeuvres with them.

The aim is to find eventually what field of values is embodied, reflected or resisted, within the work. What, in assumed meanings or counter-meanings and whether the writer knows it or not, is in play? One is "reading for values", but the phrase doesn't mean that one is at this point trying to make a "judgement of value" about the work in itself; one is trying to describe as sensitively and accurately as possible the values one finds within the work. Admittedly, one can never be quite as "objective" or outside the work as that sounds. One is part of the scene being observed. In any reading for cultural meaning, one must start with some hypotheses, acts of selection, prior judgements of certain kinds — or one could never choose between the multitude of possible hypotheses. One can't avoid in some ways making at the least implicit value-judgements; but one can try all the time to be clearer about one's own

involvement, and try to keep "reading for values" separate from "judgements of value".

So, one isn't at this point specifically asking questions about the value of the work, but is trying to understand better what Weber called "the relationship of the object to values". One is trying to find, from as internal a reading as possible, what this kind of work tells you about its society, about what that society believes, about its self-identity. It is in this sense that we can be willing to go on using that often suspected phrase "the quality of life". It is suspected because people often think that one is saying (and sometimes critics are loosely saying this) that one has a scale of merit for different attitudes to experience and is giving marks for quality according to that scale. But good literary-cultural analysis, in describing "quality of life", aims to explore better the texture or fabric or feel or temper of the life embodied in a work (and though, as I said just above, that is at bottom a subjective matter, it need not be so self-justifiedly impressionistic as we often make it).

Behind all such attempts at cultural reading are a set of major assumptions, some obvious, some not quite so obvious. Such as: that a society bears values, cannot help bearing values and deciding their relative significance; that it makes what seems like a significant or ordered whole out of experience, a total and apparently meaningful view of life; that it embodies these structures of values in systems, rituals, forms; that it lives out these values expressively, in its actions and its arts; that this living out of values is a dialectical process, never complete, always subject to innovation and change; and that no one individual ever makes a perfect "fit" with the dominant order of values of his culture.

For our purposes, the crucial idea here is that literature (and the other expressive arts) is a bearer of the meanings within a culture. It helps to recreate what it felt like to believe those things, to assume that experience carried and demanded those kinds of value. It dramatises how it feels on the pulses to live-

out those kinds of value and, in particular, what stresses and tensions come from that living-out. This helps to define the "what" that is believed. To have a better sense of the form and force of an outlook on life helps to define that outlook. By creating orders within itself, art helps to reveal the orders of values present within a culture, either by reinforcing or by resisting them and proposing new orders. Yet that makes the relationship sound too logical. Orders or anti-orders cannot be interpreted "straight" from literature of any depth. To use structuralist language: "the coherent universe of the literary work is not the same as the coherent universe of the culture outside." And indeed a work may aim to destroy all order, to suggest a state of anarchic non-order, against not only the order of its society but against all order except that of art (and that, too, may be denied). Yet just there is its cultural meaning — which can only be understood by experiencing the work directly and seeing through its eyes.

This is why we say that the expressive arts are guides of a unique kind to the value-bearing nature of societies. We also claim that they affect the nature of the values held within a society and the way they are held; that, for example, writers may purify the language and educate the emotions of the tribe. But that is harder to prove.

It is important that some critics continue to insist that a work of literature is an autonomous artefact. This reminds us that the "coherent universe" of a work is, first and foremost, itself and not something else to be used for other purposes. It underlines the singularity of each work of art and the sense in which the expressive arts are free, pointless acts. The claim for autonomy has a heuristic value and in the last decade or two has done a great deal to sharpen and make more subtle our understanding of literature. But it is at bottom a limited and mistaken claim. A work of art, no matter how much it rejects or ignores its society, is deeply rooted within it. It has massive cultural meanings. There is no such thing as "a work of art in itself" ¹⁰

So far this discussion of "reading for value" has been based on the close tonal reading of single works. And this is right: we have to begin with the single text and work outwards from it. When one starts to read for cultural meanings in groups, by genres or over a period, a whole new range of problems arises. It can be heady work, this hunting for trends or sketching in of great secular movements — by watching the change in the role of the hero or leaping across the mutations of meaning within a word. But it is justified and needs to be done. At Birmingham, though, we have not yet tried to do it, on the grounds that a grasp of how to read for value in individual works is an indispensable preliminary and that we do not yet know how to do that well.

Most of the foregoing applies to the analysis of mass art or lowbrow art as well as high art. But I said earlier that literary students who move into the examination of non-traditional literature usually work too quickly. Their preconceptions lead them astray. I also noted that it is difficult enough to make, convincingly, the case that good literature "stands outside its age so as to illuminate and judge it", difficult but worthwhile and necessary. But it is unhelpful and inaccurate to say that the mass arts or lowbrow arts are merely symptomatic, mirrors of conditions within their society, never in an oblique relation to it, simply reflectors of its conventional wisdom or folly.

Even the apparently most processed forms of mass art are more complex constructions than the usual formulations suggest, complex in themselves and in their relations to their readers or audiences. James Bond, the Archers, Andy Capp, Mrs. Dale, science fiction, Coronation Street — these do not all belong to a single group of phenomena. Mass art can mirror conventions, be a response to the need for change and innovation, be a catalyst of regressive desires or shapeless fears, act out at one level — usually unconsciously — some of a society's quarrels with itself.

Some mass art has more life than the formulation: "mass, processed, conventional, dead" suggests. And sometimes what

offers itself as, and is accepted as, "high art" (individual, alive, disinterested, engaged) is dead. Because it has some of the formal characteristics of high art — for instance, thematic pattern — we fail to notice that it lacks any perceptive life. It is better not to start with a priori divisions between types of art (high, middle, low or any of the others). It is better to start as if from scratch each time. This procedure doesn't lead to a loss of standards or a shapeless relativism. It throws us into the search for more valid distinctions between good art and poor art, and out of that there can only be gain.

Lowbrow art or mass art won't yield its cultural meanings without effort. If we make that effort, we find that it can be more revealing than we would have thought; not as revealing as high art (here is where valid distinctions really do come into play — about integrity, complexity, perceptiveness) but certainly not easily read or dismissed. At Birmingham we have learned this most of all by working in long weekly seminars over two or three months on a single short story from a women's magazine.¹¹ And one of our graduate students has had a similar experience from three years' work on Ian Fleming's James Bond novels.

Much the same is true of the other mass arts, whether or not they are predominantly verbal. The popular press, in itself and in its relations to society and its readers, is more difficult to understand than we have usually assumed and more rewarding when it is read carefully. Advertisements are even harder to read, since they are visual as well as verbal. Literary students have spent most time looking at the words of advertisements, and even then have looked sketchily. On the cultural meanings carried visually by advertisements hardly any work has been done. Those in the business who write about advertisements usually produce technical descriptions which don't discuss their inner meanings; or their attempts at discussing meanings are perfunctory. There seems to be no adequate vocabulary for describing the cultural meanings carried by the shape and layout of advertisements, let alone for describing the interactions between copy and text. Again, a graduate student at Birmingham

is trying to produce a first vocabulary for discussing the cultural implications of the visual and verbal impact of modern advertisements. In television one can say much the same: we are only just beginning to understand the complex nature of the more distinctive television productions; nor do we yet know much about the relationships between television and its overlapping audiences.¹² In analysing popular song, we have habitually given most of our attention to the words, and it has not been difficult to prove that those are banal. Any pop-song writer in Denmark Street in the 'twenties, 'thirties or 'forties could have told us that in advance, since he paid little attention to the words. But if you approach pop music in the 'sixties in this way, you get a predictable answer and blind yourself to more useful lines of approach. Pop song today is best approached as a whole musical "event" in which the words are only part and, it may be, a small or almost irrelevant part (though some pop song in the late 'sixties is paying quite serious attention to what is being said). And, once more, we know little about the relationships of pop music to the people who listen to it, or play it for themselves.

Outside the arts (high or mass) as usually recognised there are in any society a great range of other expressive phenomena. For instance, types of gesture which appear at certain times in certain parts of society, styles of dress, linguistic habits, all kinds of manners. How does one "read" these, using the word "read" to mean interpret or understand their cultural meanings? One can decide that the job is too difficult, too amorphous, that one can't separate the phenomena from the epiphenomena. One can decide to leave such regions to popular journalists or Colour Supplement trend-hunters. Or to a more firmly-structured discipline, such as one of the social sciences. [Yet most literary people, when they are not being professionally literary, do make quite large generalisations about phenomena of this kind, without any recognisable discipline. Much more important: if we are justified in claiming that literary criticism can show one how to "read" the meanings of a society through tone and style in its officially recognised expressive arts at all levels, if this is true and if we want to continue that tradition

of direct social observation set by some of our great forebears which I recalled at the start of this essay, then there is scope here to modify and adapt literary criticism to the "reading" of these non-formal but nevertheless richly expressive phenomena of contemporary culture.]

About the relationship of literary-cultural analysis to other disciplines for the study of society whole volumes wait to be written, and will eventually be written.¹³ As I said much earlier, none of these interconnections needs to weaken our sense of the importance of literature and may strengthen it.

I shall mention briefly a few disciplines with which closer connections would clearly be valuable. First, history, since a dialogue with historians seems easiest to arrive at as well as obviously interesting. But there are no easy routes in this work and an effective dialogue between historians and literary students (many, many miles past the point at which one is setting Blue Books side-by-side with Dickens) is not soon reached. The irony is that historians do often use literary approaches without calling them that, and literary people use historical approaches in the same unnamed way. Whether they use the other's approaches well or ill depends not on a training in the other discipline, but on general intelligence and imagination. But that kind of almost accidental taking in of each other's washing doesn't necessarily build a bridge across which other traffic can pass. The Birmingham Centre has discussed with sympathetic historians the way one should "read" contemporary popular journalism so as to bring out its relationship to its culture. It was difficult for the historians to see how we arrived at our statements; and we felt that they generalised too quickly from the overt content of the newspapers and paid too little attention to the meanings carried by their inner tone.

Psychology and social psychology can co-operate with literary-cultural studies in at least three ways: in exploring the psychic characteristics of individual authors and the links between

them and other aspects of their work (I referred to this earlier), in studying the social anthropology of a period (Steven Marcus's book *The Other Victorians* is a good example of this kind of reading of "low" literature), and in considering the psychology of readers and the act of reading (a handful of scattered essays by D. W. Harding are particularly suggestive in this respect).¹⁴

Other kinds of co-operation are fairly obviously possible. For example, at Birmingham we are just finishing a three-year study of changes in the British popular press, its attitudes to its readers and its sense of its own corporate personality, as these are indicated by tone and manner and style within the papers themselves. It may be that this work will be carried further by a group of social psychologists, who will use their methods to see how far there is consonance between what seems to be indicated by a reading of the newspapers and what the journalists themselves think they are doing and saying. We want to know what causes changes in tone and style and attitude — objective, political and economic and social changes? Or myths about social changes, and about the newspapers' public personalities, held by the journalists?

Even more briefly, there is a lot to be learned from anthropology. Much of the hold of mass art or popular art takes place at the level of folklore or myth, and some understanding of the way in which an anthropologist reads the meanings of myths in primitive societies and relates them to beliefs and tensions within those societies can help with the reading of television soap-operas as much as of earlier folk-literature.¹⁵ The case for more interest in structuralism follows naturally. It was the Italian critic Umberto Eco who called structural analysis "an investigation into the reciprocal implications of a rhetoric and an ideology". Even more urgent is the case for semiology, since we do not have languages or codes to discuss many of the expressive phenomena of mass society.¹⁶

The case for greater links with sociology is plain and the gains can be considerable. To speak personally and from a limited

reading in sociology: I have learned something from the disciplined systematizations as well as from the brilliant insights of good sociology. I have been struck, in reading in the sociology of knowledge and the nature of ideology, by their connections with some literary critical approaches. Weber has been interesting in more ways than one: by his "insistence on the subjective-meaning complex of action", by *verstehen* sociology (which has useful links with what we call "quality of life"), by the similarities between this discussion of "rationality" and elements in the literary debate about culture, and by his use of ideal-type analysis. Contemporary American sociologists in particular have been useful in their discussion of mass society and mass culture, and, more precisely, in communications research of various kinds (the group around the French journal *Communications* has been useful in this connection too).¹⁷

One particular area, where the two disciplines come close together and yet are not the same lies in what sociologists call "content analysis", the reading of a work so as to bring out as many as possible of its meanings. Literary people tend to underrate such sociological work since it is at bottom — it must be — quantitative; whereas the literary reading of a text is, we claim, essentially "qualitative". But content analysis can be subtle and valuable. It needn't quarrel with a qualitative or tonal cultural reading, as I described such a reading above, but each can complement and learn from the other.

Or, as with social psychology, there could be useful joint operations between literary-cultural work and sociology. In, for instance, understanding better the nature of "youth culture". Such a project would marry sociological enquiry with the "reading for cultural meaning" of the main expressive phenomena within youth culture. This has not, so far as I know, been done anywhere and would give a much fuller understanding than we have at present.

In all this, the special contribution of literary-cultural analysis is its stress of the expressive elements of a culture, and on the importance of "reading" expressively before interpreting in any other way. It is natural for social scientists (and even for historians, to some extent) to be tempted to read instrumentally or operationally, to ask: "what does this kind of thing *do* to people?" or "what do people *do* with this kind of thing?" In communications studies the movement has been from Lasswell's input/output model ("who says what to whom, where and with what effect?" — which, for a student of literature, recalls I. A. Richards) to two-step flow analysis and uses-and-gratifications studies which have led to a closer examination of audience differences ("what do different kinds of people do with the media?") and so to the study of communications as only one element in much more complex leisure and societal settings. The process needs continuing into expressive reading, in the literary critic's sense.

The literary student asks first: "what is the thing in itself?" Thereafter, although some of the questions he goes on to ask may be at bottom quite close to those of the social scientist, he doesn't put them in quite the same way; and this is important. He asks not so much: "what do people do with the object?" but "what relationship does this thing in itself, this complex thing, have to the imaginative life of the individuals who make up its readers or audiences?" Then whole new sets of questions begin to appear. Does it reinforce an accepted pattern of life? Or does it seem like a form of play? Or is it oblique, drawing upon deep psychic needs, perhaps running counter to the assumptions of its society? Or does it celebrate, stand in awe before, what one might call fundamental mysteries about human life? These questions have to be asked if one is to understand a work of art "in itself" and so its relationship to its society; however they are answered, they will tell us something about that society, not just about the work of art.

So I come back to the claim that a literary-cultural critic is not in any way "using" literature. He will do nothing to define better the contribution which literature can make to

understanding society if he does not focus himself first and foremost on the work of art "in and for itself". If he does that, its special contribution to cultural understanding may be released. It is important to say this clearly today since so many other disciplines are analysing society. The literary-critical contribution tends to go by default, just at the time when it needs to be heard, through failing to define its own character and then to make the right kinds of intellectual connections. The literary contribution lies, when it succeeds, in its integrity and sensitivity of response to the objects studied (again, one thinks of a phrase of Weber's: "emphatic understanding"). It is concerned always with reading for value. Works of literature at all levels are shot through with — irradiated with — values, with values ordered and values acted out. What literature does all the time and what, therefore, the handmaid of literature, literary criticism, must do is insist and demonstrate that, in Coleridge's words, "Men ought to be weighed, not counted". At the points where the complex, value-laden structures of societies most interact with the value-heavy, psychic life of individuals — at these points an expressive culture is born; and it is at these points that we have to listen and try to read most carefully.

I have not been writing about what is usually understood by "the sociology of literature", nor about "literature, life and thought".¹⁸ That latter phrase in itself, in its disjointed, aggregatory quality, suggests how far removed is the idea it describes from the more organic study I have been discussing. I have not been describing "background studies" nor, finally, "the history of ideas" — another over-mechanical phrase. I have been talking about literary-cultural studies, chiefly contemporary cultural studies, which begin in close cultural reading and can lead out, in conjunction with other disciplines, into better cultural analysis.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

Unless otherwise noted, dates are of the first English edition.
Many of these books are now available in paperback.

1. See Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society* (London, 1958)
There are relevant bibliographies in reports 1-4 (1964-7 inclusive) of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, University of Birmingham.
2. For example, George Eliot and D. H. Lawrence write in strikingly similar terms about the moral function of the novel.
Scrutiny. The most available introduction is in the two volume paperback selection (Cambridge, England, 1968)
3. This seems the point to mention some important books which belong to this tradition or contrast usefully with it. I have kept the list as brief as possible:
L. C. Knights, *Drama and Society* (London, 1937)
Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel* (London, 1957)
Lionel Trilling, *Beyond Culture* (London, 1966)
Among European critics, the most important in this connection is the Hungarian Marxist, George Lukacs.
Among sociological works see:
Leo Lowenthal, *Literature and the Image of Man* (Boston, 1957)
There is an article in Vol. XIX No. 4 (1967) of the *International Social Science Journal*, published by UNESCO: "The Sociology of Literature: Some Stages in its History", by Jacques Leenhardt, which gives very useful background.
4. The quotation from George Orwell is from Vol. 1, p. 222 of *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters* (London, 1968)

Apart from O. D. Leavis's *Fiction and The Reading Public* (London, 1932) which is mentioned in the text, other relevant books are:

- F. R. Leavis and Denys Thompson, *Culture and Environment* (London, 1933)
Richard Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy* (London, 1957)
Stuart Hall and Paddy Whannel, *The Popular Arts* (London, 1964)
5. I think it is also true to say that the *British* culture and society debate, let alone the Continental, is not sufficiently well known to literary students in Britain.
The continental tradition includes Saint-Simon, Comte, Durkheim, Marx, Weber, Tonnies and Mannheim. For a discussion of this tradition and of the English literary-cultural tradition see Alan Shuttleworth, *Two Working Papers in Cultural Studies* (Occasional Paper No. 2, Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, University of Birmingham, 1966)
Alan Shuttleworth suggests that yet another tradition should be associated with the two above: that of Anglo-American Social Anthropology.
6. See particularly Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and The Spirit of Capitalism* (London, 1930)
7. These questions are outlined in: Richard Hoggart, *The Literary Imagination and The Study of Society* (Occasional Paper No. 3, Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, University of Birmingham, 1968)
8. The best short guides I know to studies of effects are:
J. D. Halloran, *The Effects of Mass Communication* (Leicester University Press, 1965)
J. D. Halloran, *Attitude Formation and Change* (Leicester University Press, 1967)

A rather fuller description of "reading for tone" can be found in:

Richard Hoggart, *The Voices of Lawrence* (New Statesman, London, 14th June, 1968)

0. One of the most easily available and cogent brief statements of that view of literature which I am challenging here is to be found in Chapter 9 of Rene Wellek and Austin Warren, *The Theory of Literature* (London, 1949)
1. The record of this enquiry, as it moved from stage to stage, will be published shortly as an Occasional Paper by the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, University of Birmingham.
2. Since the characteristic and distinctive nature of television transmissions has been mentioned, this seems the right place to note:
Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media* (London, 1964)
13. Meanwhile, a very clear, shrewd and useful first guide is:
P. Rickman, *Understanding and The Human Studies* (London, 1967)
14. See Steven Marcus, *The Other Victorians* (London, 1966)
Among essays by D. W. Harding, see:
"Psychological Processes in the Reading of Fiction", *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 2, 1962, pp. 133-147
"Reader and Author", *Experience into Words*, pp. 163-174 (London, 1963)
"Raids on the Inarticulate", *The Use of English*, 19/2, Winter, 1967
"The Notion of 'Escape' in Fiction and Entertainment", *Oxford Review*, IV, Hilary, 1967
"Considered Experience: The Invitation of the Novel", *English in Education*, 2/1, Summer, 1967

See also:

Norman N. Holland, *The Dynamics of Literary Response* (New York, 1962)

15. Levi-Strauss and the analysis of popular literature. See the discussion in:
Tim Moore, *Levi-Strauss and The Cultural Sciences*, (Occasional Paper No. 4, Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, University of Birmingham, 1968)
16. Structuralism and semiology. See in particular the work of Lucien Goldmann, Umberto Eco, and Roland Barthes. More particularly, see:
Lucien Goldmann, "The Sociology of Literature: Status and Problems of Method" in Vol. XIX, No. 4, 1967 of the *International Social Science Journal*, published by UNESCO. The whole of this volume, which has the overall title, *Sociology of Literary Creativity*, is relevant.
Roland Barthes, *Elements of Semiology* (London, 1967)
Roland Barthes, *Writing Degree Zero* (London, 1967)
"Recherches Semiotiques", special issue of *Communications*, No. 4 (Paris, 1964)
"Structuralism", *Yale French Studies*, 30/37 (New Haven, 1966)
17. See: Karl Mannheim, *Essays in The Sociology of Knowledge* (London, 1952)
Rosenberg and White, *Mass Culture* (Glencoe, Illinois, 1957)
18. The Sociology of Literature. Some studies in the sociology of literature are simple and mechanistic; some are subtle and imaginative; most seem to fall in between these two poles. At its best, the sociology of literature can throw