

The British tradition: a short history

My account of cultural studies' 'first principles' has inevitably foregrounded the European theoretical influence. This should not obscure the fact that British cultural studies has very specific historical roots in postwar Britain, where the revival of capitalist industrial production, the establishment of the welfare state, and the Western powers' unity in opposition to Russian communism were all inflected into a representation of a 'new' Britain. This was a culture where class was said to have disappeared, where postwar Britain could be congratulated for its putative discontinuity with prewar Britain, and where modernity and the Americanization of popular culture were signs of a new future. The precise conditions of British or, more particularly, English culture were subjected to especially keen scrutiny in the attempt to understand these changes and their cultural, economic and political effects.

British cultural studies emerged from this context. But it was not the only product. Within the social sciences there was a substantial revival of interest in the nature of working-class culture and communities. Addressing the widely held thesis that the working class had become 'bourgeois' – that is, that their living conditions and their ideologies had become indistinguishable from those of the middle class – were a number of studies of urban working-class life that documented the survival of working-class value systems and social structures. The work of the Institute of Community Studies, and a proliferation of participant-observer studies of working-class communities, attempted to get inside these structures, often abandoning the conventions of scientific objectivity in order to do so (for an outline of this movement, see Laing 1986, ch. 2).

Interest in British popular culture came from other quarters as well; in the early 1950s, the Independent Group (IG) was examining the visual arts, architecture, graphic design and pop art, and establishing itself at the Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA) in London. This movement, like cultural studies later, was primarily interested in everyday, not elite, culture and focused particularly on the influence of American popular culture on British life – an influence that was largely to the movement's adherents' taste. In fact, as Chambers (1986) points out, 'the very term "Pop Art", coined by the art critic Lawrence Alloway in the early 1950s, was intended to describe not a new movement in painting but the products of popular culture' (p. 201).

The IG's relish for postwar culture, style and modernity was not, however, widely shared within the British academic world. Indeed, the major academic tradition I will trace into British cultural studies was implacably opposed to popular culture. The so-called 'culture and civilization' tradition was concerned by the development of popular culture, and the concomitant decline of more 'organic' communal or folk cultures that proceeded from the spread of industrialization during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Matthew Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy*, published in 1869, warned of the likely consequences of the spread of this urban, 'philistine culture', which was accelerating with the extension of literacy and democracy. Where class divisions had once been sufficiently rigid to confine political and economic power to one class, industrialization and the growth of the middle class and an urban working class had blurred these divisions. The aesthetic barrenness of the culture of the new 'masses' worried Arnold, who felt that such a culture must necessarily fail to equip its subjects for the social and political roles they would play within democratic society.

The 'culture and civilization' tradition is most clearly defined, however, by its response to the twentieth-century technologies that radically extended the purchase of 'mass culture' – in particular, those that enabled the mass distribution of cultural forms such as the popular novel, the women's magazine, the cinema, the popular press, the popular song and, of course, television. Between the wars, general concern about the moral and aesthetic content of culture began to concentrate on its forms of representation (the mass media in particular) and to become identified with the work of a circle around the English literary critical

journal *Scrutiny*: F. R. Leavis, his wife Q. D. Leavis, Denys Thompson and L. C. Knights. Relating the 'abuse' of language to specific social and moral effects, the *Scrutiny* group produced some of the earliest critiques of 'mass culture': F. R. Leavis and Denys Thompson's *Culture and Environment* (1933) and Q. D. Leavis' *Fiction and the Reading Public* (1932), which looked at, respectively, advertising and popular fiction. T. S. Eliot, although often an opponent of the *Scrutiny* line in literary criticism, also analysed the forms and content of popular culture in order to attack the classless 'new' culture in *Notes Towards a Definition of Culture* in 1948.

These approaches were unashamedly elitist; from their perspective, popular culture was to be deplored for its deficiencies – for its lack of 'moral seriousness' or of aesthetic value. The mass culture of contemporary England was unfavourably compared to an earlier, albeit mythical, folk culture located in some past formation of the 'garden of England'. Industrialization, mass communication and technology were all seen to be inimical to this earlier, more organic version of British existence; it was as if the entire twentieth century were intrinsically 'anti-British'. The specific concern with mass culture was generalized in order to criticize other popular cultural forms, including many of the forms of everyday life within industrial societies. Within such a critique, the products of popular culture 'existed only in order to be condemned, to be found wanting on one ground or another':

as corrosive of the capacity for ethical and aesthetic discrimination, or – and most enduringly – as worse than whatever forms of popular culture may have preceded them, a corruption and dilution of an earlier and supposedly, sturdier, more robust and organic phase in the development of the people's culture.

(Bennett 1981, 6)

The account of the everyday life of the ordinary citizen produced by these studies was extremely remote and patronizing. As Bennett (1981) says, it was a discourse of the 'cultured' about the culture of those without 'culture': 'Popular culture was approached from a distance and gingerly, held out at arm's length by outsiders who clearly lacked any fondness for or participation in the forms they were studying. It was always the culture of "other people" that was at issue' (p. 6).

This elitism was made to seem more 'natural' and legitimate by the fact that those expressing it had similar class backgrounds; the prewar means of entrance to higher education more or less ensured this. However, the expansion of educational opportunities within Britain after the war, and the spread of adult education as a means of postwar reconstruction as well as an arm of the welfare state, eventually had an effect on the class origins of those who inherited this intellectual tradition. The 'scholarship boys and girls' (those admitted to universities and colleges on merit, regardless of income or background) included a significant number from the working or lower-middle class. Key figures in the next generation of cultural criticism in Britain – Raymond Williams and Richard Hoggart, for two – were working-class, and had a personal involvement with this despised sphere of culture. As Bennett (1981) goes on to point out:

This has altered the entire tone of the debate as a sense of liking for and, often, deep involvement in the forms studied has replaced the aloof and distant approach 'from above', and as the need to *understand* the effects of popular culture on ourselves has displaced the need to *condemn* it because of what it does to 'other people'.

(p. 6)

Certainly the influence of the scholarship students was important in recasting the examination of popular culture in Britain in the 1950s and 1960s. Even now, many of those working in cultural studies tend to foreground their origins as being in some respects from outside the mainstream of British academic culture. Links with the early foundations of cultural studies in adult education are also relevant here; Williams, Hoggart and Hall all worked as adult education tutors early in their careers. Williams acknowledges debts to this work in *Culture and Society 1780–1950* (1966), *Communications* (1962) and *The Long Revolution* (1975) while Hall (1990) notes the importance of developing his ideas in negotiation with 'the dirty outside world' (p. 12). Working in adult education brought the tutor into touch with a range of subcultural groups not normally encountered at university, whose membership in a popular rather than an elite culture needed to be accepted and understood by their teachers. One can imagine how this might provoke some radical rethinking for a standard Leavisite of the time.

Others were also having to do some rethinking at this time. The cultural and ideological gap between schoolteachers and their pupils was widening as popular culture became more pervasive. The cultural development of the schoolchild became a battleground, defended by the 'civilizing' objectives of the education system but assailed by the illicit pleasures of popular culture. The spread of commercial television across Britain in the late 1950s increased the urgency with which such concerns were felt. Stuart Laing (1986, 194) suggests that the 1960 National Union of Teachers (NUT) conference, titled 'Popular Culture and Personal Responsibility', was a seminal event at which these debates were aired and structured.

The National Union of Teachers conference was aimed at finding ways of dealing with popular culture that did not dismiss it out of hand and thus acknowledged its place within the everyday lives of school pupils, but that none the less taught some principles of discrimination – the exercise of choice, the 'personal responsibility' of the title – to guide pupils' consumption of cultural forms. This was a liberalization of the Leavis line – it made it possible to argue that certain popular forms (such as jazz, the blues or the cinema) had recognizable aesthetic concerns and traditions. But it was still, residually, a high-culture view of popular culture, interested in aesthetic rather than social pleasures and meanings.

It was, however, an influential conference; Hoggart and Williams both spoke, together with the British Home Secretary, Rab Butler, Stuart Hall, writer Arnold Wesker and film director Karel Reisz. Williams acknowledges the conference's implications in *Communications*, and two books emerged directly out of its deliberations: Hall and Whannel's *The Popular Arts* (1964) and Denys Thompson's *Discrimination and Popular Culture* (1964, rev. ed. 1973¹). Hall and Whannel's book will be dealt with later, but Thompson's collection is a wonderfully clear demonstration of the confusion engendered by the combination of an elite method of analysis of and a democratic-humanist interest in the forms of everyday life. The essays in *Discrimination and Popular Culture* adopt extremely varied perspectives on the collective objective of counteracting the debasement of standards resulting from the *misuse* of the press, radio, cinema and television. On the one hand we have the moral panic motivating David Holbrook's literary analysis of the 'dismal' and 'limited world' of

popular magazines, while on the other hand we have Graham Martin's sober institutional study of newspapers, which notes how simplistic and misleading such literary analysis can be when applied to popular culture (Thompson 1973, 80). Rather than following Holbrook's lead, Martin relates the styles and contents of the different products of the press to their social roles. Other contributors attempt to legitimate the popular arts by discovering hitherto unnoticed homologies between popular and high art; this effort is almost parodic: 'groups like Pink Floyd and The Who are concerned mainly with instrumental sounds, with developing their music along lines sometimes as abstract as those of the classical symphonist' (p. 144). It is a measure of the distance we have travelled in understanding rock music that this kind of comment rarely appears these days.

Of course, Denys Thompson's introduction is much more sensible than this, and the collection has been influential; it was still supporting courses on popular culture well into the mid-1970s. But the babble of competing voices it licenses to speak signifies the failure of the analysts of popular culture, in 1964, to articulate a clear sense of their objectives and methods. The NUT conference is a sign of the felt need for more appropriate ways of understanding the problem of culture; *Discrimination and Popular Culture* indicates that while the culture and civilization tradition may have asked important questions, it lacked the equipment to address them. It is time to begin tracing the development of alternative methodologies and objectives, and my starting points are the conventional but necessary ones: the work of Hoggart, Williams, Hall and the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies.

HOGGART AND THE USES OF LITERACY

Richard Hoggart was born to a working-class family in Leeds in the last year of the Great War, was educated at his hometown university and served in the British Army during World War II. From 1946 to 1959, Hoggart was an adult education tutor at the University of Hull, teaching literature. Laing (1986, ch. 7) suggests that this experience was crucial to Hoggart's definition of culture and the place of education within it. The typical participant in adult education (usually an individual who for economic, personal or class reasons was denied or had forgone normal entry into

higher education) is also the reader about whom, and to whom, *The Uses of Literacy* (1958) appears to have been written. Certainly, there were few opportunities for Hoggart to 'convert' conclusively to another set of class positions; he was teaching those who had come from much the same background as himself, and interpreting for them a set of cultural standards that may have seemed foreign but nevertheless prevailed.

More than most academic books, *The Uses of Literacy* invokes the personal experience of the author – not always as direct evidence, it must be said, but often through the admission of a personal partiality, or even a worried ambivalence. This has some benefits; in those chapters that outline the 'full rich life' Hoggart remembers as typical of the working class – in particular the linkages among forms of popular entertainment, the social practices of the neighbourhood, and family relations – Hoggart's personal experience provides a sense of 'authenticity' that is among the book's most distinctive attributes. *The Uses of Literacy* is not primarily confessional, however. The book's method is to employ the analytical skills provided by Hoggart's literary training, often to great effect: the analysis of the discourses and conventions of the performance of popular song, for instance, is interesting and persuasive, and the discussion of popular fiction still repays attention.

It is important to recognize Hoggart's achievement in applying, as successfully as he did, the analytical protocols of literary studies to a wider range of cultural products: music, newspapers, magazines and popular fiction, in particular. The book's most significant achievement, however, is the demonstration of the interconnections among various aspects of public culture – pubs, working-men's clubs, magazines and sports, for instance – and the structures of an individual's private, everyday life – family roles, gender relations, language patterns, the community's 'common sense'. Hoggart describes working-class life in the prewar period as a complex whole, in which public values and private practices are tightly intertwined. Subsequently, he tends not to separate out specific elements as 'good' or 'bad'; Hoggart acknowledges the social determinants of even the regressive aspects of working-class living, such as domestic and neighbourhood violence. However, while Hoggart's account of traditional urban working-class life is admirable in this sense of its complex interconnectedness, it is nevertheless a nostalgic account of an

organic, rather than a constructed, culture. In common with the rest of the culture and civilization tradition, Hoggart looks back to a cultural Fall, when earlier versions of working-class culture were lost. Hoggart differs from Leavis or Eliot only in that his Fall seems to have taken place during the 1930s rather than the nineteenth century, so that his description of the urban working class of this period bears all the attributes of a folk rather than a popular culture.²

Nostalgia is central to the book's project. Hoggart's establishment of the richness of prewar working-class culture in the first half of *The Uses of Literacy* is employed to heighten the second half's contrast with the newer 'mass' popular culture of postwar England. This contrast stresses the latter's lack of organicism, its failure to emerge from specific roots within the lived cultures of ordinary people. In the analysis of *this* version of popular culture, Hoggart is less inclined to suspend aesthetic judgement, or to take the culture on its own terms. The book regards modern popular music, American television, the jukebox, popular crime and romance novels, and cheap magazines as intrinsically phoney. They are accused of displacing, but providing no substitute for, a popular culture experientially connected to the social conditions of those who produce and consume it. Not only are the relations of production and consumption a problem, but – almost inevitably – the quality of mass-produced culture is, too. Hoggart spends much of the second half of the book invoking Leavisite aesthetic standards against these cultural products. Such a practice is not a significant feature of his portrait of the 'full rich life' of the past, but he clearly feels authorized to criticize the newer, worrying trends. Indeed, Hoggart anticipates the readers' support in this enterprise; he admits to assuming their agreement with his judgement of the 'decent', the 'healthy', the 'serious' and the 'trivial' in his analyses of popular culture texts (p. 344). The result of Hoggart's critical practice is a book about the importance of such distinctions, of standards of discrimination, in the production and consumption of popular cultural forms.

The Uses of Literacy observes conflicting social and theoretical allegiances: to both the culture and civilization tradition from which its ideological assumptions and analytical practices proceed, and to a working-class cultural and political tradition that acknowledges significance in the *whole* of the cultural field. The contradictions thus produced are apparent in the book's method,

as it moves from an affectionate account of the social function of popular culture to an evaluative critique of its textual forms, exposing both the author's ambivalence about the class he has left and the limitations of the theoretical tradition he has joined.

These problems are clearest when Hoggart deals with specific examples of this new mass culture. While he well describes the complexity of the constitution of the cultural field of his youth, he is blind and deaf to the complexity of, let alone the functions served by, the 'full rich life' of contemporary working-class youths. A notorious example of his alienation from his subject is his description of 'the juke-box boys':

Like the cafés I described in an earlier chapter, the milk-bars indicate at once, in the nastiness of their modernistic knick-knacks, their glaring showiness, an aesthetic breakdown so complete that, in comparison with them, the layout of the living rooms in some of the poor homes from which the customers come seems to speak of a tradition as balanced and civilized as an eighteenth century townhouse... the 'nickelodeon' is allowed to blare out so that the noise would be sufficient to fill a good-sized ballroom, rather than a converted shop in the main street. The young men waggle one shoulder or stare, as desperately as Humphrey Bogart, across the tubular chairs.

Compared even with the pub around the corner, this is all a peculiarly thin and pallid form of dissipation, a sort of spiritual dry-rot amid the odour of boiled milk.

(pp. 247-48)

He goes on to describe the young men as 'the directionless and tamed helots of a machine minding class':

If they seem to consist so far chiefly of those of poorer intelligence or from homes subject to special strains, that is probably due to the strength of a moral fibre which most cultural providers for working-class people are helping to de-nature... The hedonistic but passive barbarian who rides in a fifty-horsepower bus for threepence, to see a five million dollar film for one-and-eightpence, is not simply a social oddity; he is a portent.

(p. 250)

As one group of critics has said, this prose could almost – 'in its lack of concreteness and "felt" qualities – have been written by

one of the new "hack" writers [Hoggart] so perceptively analyses' elsewhere (Hall and Jefferson 1976, 19).³

The book, none the less, has enjoyed substantial influence. Stuart Laing (1986, 184) has referred to Richard Dyer's proposition that Hoggart's construction of working-class life has influenced the long-running TV serial *Coronation Street*, which takes place in a fictionalized northern environment Reyner Banham satirically terms 'Hoggartsborough'. The book's most enduring theoretical value, however, lies in the fact that it reveals, in Critcher's (1979) words, the 'network of shared cultural meanings which sustains relationships between different facets of culture' (p. 19), and the complexity of this network. If some of these meanings are subjected to inappropriate judgements, the book does nevertheless open up culture as a field of forms and practices, and asks us to understand them.

As a result of *The Uses of Literacy*, Hoggart became a highly visible contributor to public arguments about the media and popular culture, and is still invoked as an authority in the area. After a period of four years as professor of English at Birmingham, Hoggart became the founding director of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) at the University of Birmingham in 1964.⁴ He remained there until 1968, when he left to become assistant director-general at UNESCO. Hoggart's work at the Centre continued, significantly developed and reframed by Stuart Hall, but his own writing since *The Uses of Literacy* has not exercised the same influence on the theoretical development of cultural studies. The role of the theoretical pioneer passed over to Raymond Williams; it is to his work we turn now.

RAYMOND WILLIAMS

Like Hoggart, Raymond Williams came from a working-class background – in his case, a Welsh village. Also like Hoggart, Williams spent most of his early career as an adult education tutor, for Oxford University, from 1946 to 1960. The influence of this role was considerable: Williams' involvement in the journal *Politics and Letters*, a journal that aimed at uniting left-wing working-class politics with Leavisite literary criticism, was directed towards an audience of 'adult education tutors and their students' (Laing 1986, 198), and his first book, *Culture and Society* (1966), came directly out of an adult education class on the idea

of culture in T. S. Eliot, F. R. Leavis, Clive Bell and Matthew Arnold. *Communications* (1962) explicitly acknowledges its debt to Williams' time in adult education.

Williams' theoretical influence over the development of cultural studies has arguably been more profound than any other, and it began with the publication of *Culture and Society* in 1958. *Culture and Society* is a book of literary history, but with a crucial difference; its focus is not on literary texts for their own sake but for their relationship to an idea. Williams follows a thread in English thought and writing through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in order to establish the cultural grounding of ideas and their representations. The book employs a version of Leavisite close textual analysis, and has certainly had a life on textbook lists as a consequence of that (in fact, that is how I first read the book myself). But its movement is back from the idiosyncrasies of the text to movements within the society, relating specific representations to the culture's ways of seeing. This is the real strength of *Culture and Society*: the reader's continual sense of an entire field of study emerging from the clarity and persistence of the book's pursuit of the connections between cultural products and cultural relations.

To read *Culture and Society* now is to be impressed by its prescience, and by how continually its insights and objectives outrun the supply of available theoretical support. That the book does not actually constitute the field itself should come as no surprise; most of cultural studies' constitutive theoretical positions – from structuralism, from critical Marxism, from semiotics – were simply unavailable to most British readers at the time it was written.⁵

Williams' work in this period enjoys a complicated relationship with the Leavisite tradition. It emphasizes practical criticism and offers a version of English cultural history that in many ways accords with Leavis', invoking an 'uncertain nostalgia for the "organic", "common culture" of an England that 'predates and is more "English" than industrialised England' (Eagleton 1978, 40). However, Williams' view of culture cannot be entirely contained within this tradition; his celebrated opening account of the four meanings of the word *culture* includes that of culture as a 'whole way of life, material, intellectual and spiritual' (Williams 1966, 16). Williams is interested in the whole of cultural experience, its meaning and 'patterning': accordingly, he finds himself

interested not just in literary or philosophical uses of language but in 'actual language', 'the words and sequences which particular men and women have used in trying to give meaning to their experience' (p. 18). He is unaware of structuralist explorations of language systems as a means to understanding the workings of culture, and so is unable to develop this interest further; as he says, with unconscious understatement, 'the area of experience to which the book refers has produced its own difficulties in terms of method' (p. 17). In *Culture and Society*, Williams 'still has to discover the idiom which will allow him to extend "practical criticism" and organicist social positions into fully socialist analysis' (Eagleton 1978, 39). What he *does* discover is that culture is a key category, because it connects his two major interests – literary analysis and social inquiry.

The category of 'culture', however, cannot be said to be fully developed in *Culture and Society*, although it pervades the book's arguments. Williams is still caught among the four definitions the book canvasses. This is most noticeable in the chapters dealing with the twentieth century, where Williams collides head-on with the culture and civilization tradition. His account of Eliot's formulation of culture as 'a whole way of life' is critical, and his discussion of Leavis rejects the text-based approach to the mass media and popular culture upon which most Leavisite critiques depend. 'It is obvious,' says Williams, 'that the ways of feeling and thinking embodied in such institutions as the popular press, advertising and the cinema cannot finally be criticised without reference to a way of life' (p. 251). And while he is both critical of and distanced from traditional Marxism in this book, he does admit the relevance of Marxist perspectives:

The one vital lesson which the nineteenth century had to learn – and learn urgently because of the very magnitude of its changes – was that the basic economic organisation could not be separated and excluded from its moral and intellectual concerns. Society and individual experience were alike being transformed, and this driving agency, which there were no adequate traditional procedures to understand and interpret, had, in depth, to be taken into consciousness.

(p. 271)

The economic basis of society, in short, was centrally implicated in any question of culture. Although Williams then moves into a

ritual attack on economic determinism, it is clear that the Arnoldian definition of culture as 'the best that has been thought and said' is subordinated to a more social, historical and materialist view. Culture is talked of both as an idea, its history 'a record of our meanings and our definitions', and as sets of material forms, their history that of the 'changed conditions of our common life' (p. 285).

While Williams insists that 'there are in fact no masses; there are only ways of seeing people as masses' (p. 289), his rejection of the mass culture critique is less than categorical. Like Thompson's contributors, Williams attempts to legitimate certain aspects of mass culture at the expense of others – the 'good' against the 'bad'. The book is dated by this strategy, but to Williams' credit he sees that it is futile to attempt the analysis of a 'whole way of life' with a set of standards and analytical tools developed in order to establish the preeminence of one small section of it. Eventually, Williams has to admit that democratic notions of equality are among the casualties of a Leavisite approach to culture: 'An insistence on equality,' he says, 'may be, in practice, a denial of value.' Value, the proposition that some things are inherently and permanently better than others, is not an innocent category; Williams warns against its function as dogma, as a means of legitimating existing ideological structures. Most important, he deplores the invocation of value as a means of denigrating the everyday lives of the vast majority of ordinary individuals. He characterizes this as an act of contempt, the sign of a lack of interest in 'men and their common efforts' (p. 306). Such a position is the reverse of Williams' own.

Reading the concluding sections of *Culture and Society*, one can see Williams' own position hardening, focusing on culture as the preeminent object of attention, and laying the foundations for the more fully argued and conclusive establishment of the category in *The Long Revolution*. In this next book Williams finally breaks with the literary-moral tradition that inevitably compromises *Culture and Society*.

The Long Revolution was published in 1961, a year after the NUT conference, and it reflects the increasing intensity of contemporary debates about the cultural impact of the media.⁶ While Williams uses the book to clarify his own interest in culture, and to move further away from the tradition of thought that struggles to contain him in *Culture and Society*, it is, nevertheless,

also a book that more closely aligns him with Hoggart's pessimistic accounts of popular culture and, in particular, the media. Unlike Hoggart's, however, Williams' pessimism is not founded entirely on aesthetic grounds, as *The Long Revolution* – significantly – focuses on the cultural institutions, their ideologies and discourses, as well as on media products. Admittedly, the book is limited by internal contradictions; it lacks a theory of cultural structure and an appropriate method of textual analysis. However, its publication was, as Stuart Hall (1980a) has said, a 'seminal event in English post-war intellectual life':

It shifted the whole ground of debate from a literary-moral to an anthropological definition of culture. But it defined the latter now as the 'whole process' by means of which meanings and definitions are socially constructed and historically transformed, with literature and art as only one, specially privileged, kind of social communication.

(p. 19)

This shift is the strategic one, making the development of cultural studies possible.

The Long Revolution's opening premise is that British society has been engaged in a progressive and gradual revolution: through industrialization, democratization and cultural transformation. Since the importance of the first two historical movements was generally acknowledged, the book took on the task of establishing the comparable significance of cultural change:

Our whole way of life, from the shape of our communities to the organisation and content of education, and from the structure of the family to the status of art and entertainment, is being profoundly affected by the progress and interaction of democracy and industry, and by the extension of communications. This deeper cultural revolution is a large part of our most significant living experience, and is being interpreted and indeed fought out, in very complex ways, in the world of art and ideas. It is when we try to correlate change of this kind with the changes covered by the disciplines of politics, economics, and communications that we discover some of the most difficult but also some of the most human questions.

(Williams 1975, 12)

Dealing with these questions occupies the first section of the book, which attempts to set up a theoretical framework for the analysis of culture. This framework is clearly much advanced from that operating in *Culture and Society*. What emerges is an impressive set of definitions of terms and practices:

Culture is a description of a particular way of life, which expresses certain meanings and values not only in art and learning but also in institutions and ordinary behaviour. The analysis of culture, from such a definition, is the clarification of the meanings and values implicit and explicit in a particular way of life, a particular culture.

(p. 57)

The objects of analysis are also outlined:

Such analysis will include . . . historical criticism . . . in which intellectual and imaginative works are analysed in relation to particular traditions and societies, but will also include analysis of elements in the way of life that to followers of other definitions are not 'culture' at all: the organisation of production, the structure of the family, the structure of institutions which express or govern social relationships, the characteristic forms through which members of the society communicate.

(p. 57)

Williams insists on the need for seeing the cultural process as a whole, so that the textual analysis of media products (for instance) should be conducted in relation to an analysis of the institutions and social structures producing them. The analysis of culture, then, is 'the study of relationships between elements in a whole way of life', attempting to 'discover the nature of the organisation which is the complex of these relationships' (p. 63).

These definitions are still relevant today. Less enduring, perhaps, are the methods Williams used to carry them out. It is difficult to read the book's focus on the constitutive 'patterns' of cultural relationships, for instance, without regretting the absence of structuralist methodologies. Further, as the book presents its account of contemporary England, one notices that the development of analytic methods is subordinated to the development of a particular critique of British culture. The book is not merely an account of the long revolution, but an argument for its continuation. The latter half of *The Long Revolution* is littered with calls

for a 'common culture', the rejection of class culture and the conception of a society 'which could quite reasonably be organised on the basis of collective democratic institutions and the substitution of cooperative equality for competition as the principle of social and economic policy' (p. 328). Behind this is a disenchantment with contemporary English life, which stirs up the residue of nostalgic organicism from Williams' first book. The analysis, then, does not establish a methodology.

The book does make a further contribution to a theory of culture, however, in its notion of the 'structure of feeling'. Williams suggests that all cultures possess a particular sense of life, a 'particular and characteristic colour': 'this structure of feeling is the culture of a period' (p. 64). Williams' own description of the term is notoriously slippery; Tony Bennett's (1981) is more accessible, if still tentative: 'The general idea . . . is that of a shared set of ways of thinking and feeling which, displaying a patterned regularity, form and are formed by the "whole way of life" which comprises the "lived culture" of a particular epoch, class or group' (p. 26). Even this, as Bennett implies, is too general. One must admit that, while the idea has been influential, it is hard not to sympathize with Eagleton's (1978, 33) view that Williams' description of 'that firm but intangible organisation of values and perceptions' of a culture is little more than a description of ideology.

The concept's function within Williams' theory of culture, perhaps, explains why it has remained in use for so long, despite its lack of clarity. It is important to realize that the structure of feeling of a period can run contrary to the dominant cultural definitions. Thus, British working-class culture survives despite its devaluation within successive dominant constructions of culture. Williams uses the category as a means of insisting on the existence of an *organic* popular spirit, closely linked to lived conditions and values, that may or may not be reflected (and that may be contested or resisted) at other levels of culture. As Anthony Barnett (1976) says, the structure of feeling is 'designed exactly to restore the category of experience to the world; as a part of its mutable and various social history' (p. 62).⁷ As we shall see, this is a strategic move that ultimately connected Williams with the British 'culturalists', distancing him from the European structuralists and from formulations of ideology that tended to subordinate individual experience. The category, and the problems in

defining it adequately, proceeds from the conflict between Williams' humanism – his insistence on the free agency of the individual – and his socialism – his awareness of the ways in which individual experience is culturally and politically constrained.

With all its faults, *The Long Revolution* establishes a comprehensive theoretical foundation for cultural studies, ready for the influence of European Marxism and structuralism to provide the methodologies for its further development. Williams' background in literary criticism gives both textual and historical approaches their due; the full range of later applications of cultural studies is foreshadowed at one point or another. Ironically, Williams himself may be said to benefit least of all from this; he founded a tradition that others, largely, have developed.

Both Hoggart and Williams offer slightly idealized versions of working-class culture as, in a sense, models to be emulated in contemporary British culture. What they value in the 'common culture' of their respective pasts seems to be the complex unity of their everyday lives: the close social relations among work, organized politics, public entertainments and so on. This is what Hoggart believed was threatened by the new mass-produced culture. Williams' argument for a progressive liberalization of culture and the spread of democracy in *Culture and Society* led him to a more optimistic vision: of the spread of working-class cultural values achieving the common culture of socialism. By the time he wrote *The Long Revolution*, however, this optimism was already fading, and his sense of the danger posed by the structure and practices of media institutions moved him closer to Hoggart's position. Laing (1986, ch. 7) suggests that their positions were finely connected in the NUT conference, and that progressively during the 1960s Williams' position was being revised.

During this period, Williams entered intramural teaching, as a lecturer at Cambridge. Laing (1986, 216–17) suggests that as Williams moved away from adult education he also moved away from an emphasis on 'the lived', everyday culture. The 1960s saw an unprecedented explosion of popular cultural forms in Britain: 'swinging Britain', the Liverpool sound of the Beatles and others, and the identification between the nation and a populist modernity are signified through the James Bond movies and the appropriation of the Union Jack as a pop icon on tote bags, T-shirts and even shoes. Substantiated by the widespread adoption

of the NUT conference's strategy of centring discussion of class and popular culture on the role of the mass media, such factors all contributed to the establishment of media analysis as 'the central plank of the new field of cultural studies' for Williams as for others (Laing 1986, 217). In *The Long Revolution*, it is noticeable how the term *communications* competes with *culture*; the first conclusive sign of this shift in attention, however, is the publication of the first edition of *Communications* in 1962.

It is important to stress that Williams' discussion of the functions of modern communication technologies is not separate from the cultural project that informed *Culture and Society* and *The Long Revolution*. The programme of cultural change laid out in *The Long Revolution* reappears in *Communications*. Again, Williams (1962) insists that the cultural revolution is 'part of a great process of human liberation, comparable in importance with the industrial revolution and the struggle for democracy':

The essential values . . . are common to the whole process: that men should grow in capacity and power to direct their own lives – by creating democratic institutions, by bringing new sources of energy to human work, and by extending the expression and exchange of experience on which understanding depends.

(p. 138)

The goal of a common culture is still there, shaping the second half of the book. This time, however, the cultural revolution will be accomplished through, rather than in spite of, mass communications technologies and institutions; reforms within the communications sector itself have the potential to democratize society.

Despite its primary focus on technologies and institutions, *Communications* is still caught in the web of complexities and contradictions that ensnares attempts to separate art and culture. On the one hand, Williams defends the permanence of literary value against the variations of history: 'We must not confuse,' he says, 'the great works of the past' with the particular 'social minority which identifies itself with them' (p. 110). On the other hand, although he continues to interrogate aspects of popular culture in order to privilege 'only the best work', he is careful to separate himself from Leavisite positions and terminology: 'If we look at what we call "mass culture" and "minority culture" [these are Leavis' terms], I am not sure that we invariably find one on

the side of reality and one against it' (p. 113). Indeed, at the end of the revised edition (1975), he concludes that the whole controversy has now been displaced by the development of cultural studies: the 'older kind of defence of "high" culture, with its associated emphasis on minority education and the social privileges needed to sustain it, has not disappeared but is now clearly residual' (p. 183).

In general the move from the central category of culture to that of communication is potentially quite helpful, since it enables Williams to shed some of the baggage carried from the culture and civilization traditions and to begin to explore other traditions of theory and research. Unfortunately, the strongest influence on the book is from American communications research, primarily empiricist branches of sociology and political economy. The result is a strong collection of content analyses and media history – models for others to follow but almost entirely enclosed within an existing American theoretical tradition. Much of this tradition is now discredited within cultural studies, a casualty of the anti-empiricist cast of structuralist thought, and Williams' dependence on these theoretical models makes *Communications* a dated book. That said, in *Communications* Williams does take a useful strategic step towards understanding the communication industries rather than simply deploring their products, and towards seeing communication as contained within culture rather than as secondary to it. And, possibly most usefully, the 'Proposals' chapter offers sets of suggestions for the study and teaching of communication: these include proposals for the study of media institutions and media production, and for the development of a mode of textual criticism that can deal with *all* cultural forms. As so often with Williams' early work, one is surprised by how closely these proposals describe what has become established current practice.

Between *Communications* and Williams' next exploration of cultural studies, *Television: Technology and Cultural Form* (1974), Williams returned to literary studies, publishing two studies of drama, *Modern Tragedy* (1966) and *Drama from Ibsen to Brecht* (1968). His more personal account of British culture, *The Country and the City*, was published in 1973. By 1974 the study of the media was well established in British academia through media sociology, media economy and the developing field of cultural studies. The CCCS had been working primarily in media studies for some years, and the Leicester Centre for Mass Communi-

cation Research had also produced ground-breaking research. Williams still had new things to offer media and cultural studies, however. *Television: Technology and Cultural Form* is a powerful and original book, and although it offers resistance at strategic points to the influence of structuralism – of which Williams was by now well aware – it marks the beginning of a new breed of British accounts of television.

Television: Technology and Cultural Form breaks with Williams' previous work in two key areas: first, it rejects the accounts of technologies and their social effects produced by American mass communication research, research so influential on *Communications*; second, instead of focusing solely on the content of television programmes, it analyses the medium's technological structures and how they work to determine television's characteristic forms. While work of this kind was going on elsewhere, particularly in the CCCS, this was the first book-length study to employ such an approach to the medium.

Possibly the book's most widely quoted passage describes Williams' first experience of American TV, in a hotel in Miami:

I began watching a film and at first had some difficulty in adjusting to a much greater frequency of commercial 'breaks'. Yet this was a minor problem compared to what eventually happened. Two other films, which were due to be shown on the same channel on other nights, began to be inserted as trailers. A crime in San Francisco (the subject of the original film) began to operate in an extraordinary counterpoint not only with the deodorant and cereal commercials but with a romance in Paris and the eruption of a prehistoric monster who laid waste New York. Moreover, this was sequence in a new sense. Even in commercial British television there is a visual signal – the residual sign of an interval – before and after the commercial sequences, and 'programme' trailers only occur between 'programmes'. Here was something quite different, since the transitions from film to commercial and from film A to films B and C were in effect unmarked.

(Williams 1974, 92)

What Williams takes from this is the recognition that, despite TV guides, broadcast TV is not organized around discrete units – programmes. Nor is TV's characteristic form a chain of programme sequences regularly interrupted by advertising. Williams

argues that the multiplicity of programme forms within an evening's TV are not disruptive, but are incorporated into its 'flow':

What is being offered is not, in older terms, a programme of discrete units with particular insertions, but a planned flow, in which the true series is not the published sequence of programme items but this sequence is transformed by the inclusion of another kind of sequence, so that these sequences together compose the real flow, the real 'broadcasting'.

(p. 90)

This flow effect is institutionalized in programming policies aimed at keeping the audience with the channel for the whole evening, hence the use of trailers to 'sustain that evening's flow' (p. 93).

Notwithstanding John Ellis' (1982, 117-24) critique in *Visible Fictions*, which points out that the same principles can be used to describe formal patterns *within* television programmes and develops the idea that television works in 'segments', not programmes, Williams' development of the notion of flow and sequence has been significant. Its great advance is that it attempts to understand how television, as a medium, specifically works. 'Flow' and 'sequence' aim to describe a characteristic of the experience of television, a characteristic produced by the complex articulation of production practices, technological and economic determinants, and the social function of television within the home, as well as the formal structures of individual television genres. It is a kind of analysis that is singularly lacking in *Communications*, and in most other full-length studies of the medium produced at the time.

The final section of *Television: Technology and Cultural Form* deals with the effects of the technology of television. It attacks empiricist mass communication research and technological determinism, and concludes by restating Williams' view of what 'determination' is. While he admits the validity of certain forms of American 'effects' research, Williams directs his strongest criticism at developments from such research which argue that the medium of television itself – not even the specific message – has a determining, causal effect on behaviour:

If the medium – whether print or television – is the cause, all other causes, all that men ordinarily see as history, are at once reduced to effects. Similarly, what are elsewhere seen as effects,

and as such subject to social, cultural, psychological and moral questioning, are excluded as irrelevant by comparison with the direct physiological and therefore 'psychic' effects of the media as such.

(p. 127)

In other words, history is the determining force; it produces *and* the medium of television. Williams offers accounts of the development of radio and television in which he demonstrates the difference between the invention of a technology and its diffusion in a culture. Invention itself does not cause cultural change; to understand any of the mass communication technologies we must 'historicize', we must consider their articulation with specific sets of interests and within a specific social order (p. 128). Consequently, Marshall McLuhan's work is dismissed as 'ludicrous' and Williams treats his privileging of the technologies of television with contempt: 'If the effect of the medium is the same, whoever controls or uses it, and whatever apparent content he may try to insert, then we can forget ordinary political and cultural argument and let the technology run itself' (p. 128).

Williams accuses this tradition of media analysis of 'technological determinism', that is, of ascribing to a technology a set of intentions and effects independent of history. In place of that relatively crude explanation for the determination of cultural practices, institutions or technologies, Williams offers his own, subtler explanation:

The reality of determination is the setting of limits and the exertion of pressures, within which variable social practices are profoundly affected but never necessarily controlled. We have to think of determination not as a single force, or a single abstraction of forces, but as a process in which real determining factors – the distribution of power or of capital, social and physical inheritance, relations of scale and size between groups – set limits and exert pressures, but neither wholly control nor wholly predict the outcome of complex activity within or at these limits, and under or against these pressures.

(p. 130)

This formulation is still useful today.

Williams' work to this point in his career is marked by the struggle between his humanism and his socialism; none of the

works examined so far has accepted the invitation of Marxist thought as a means of resolving the many contradictions within his thinking about culture, art and communications. In *Marxism and Literature*, published in 1977, we have an extraordinary theoretical 'coming out', as Williams finally admits the usefulness of Marxism and his place within its philosophical traditions.

Marxism and Literature begins with an autobiographical account of Williams' own relationship with and resistance to Marxism. He reveals he had a relatively unsophisticated knowledge of it at the time he wrote *Culture and Society*, but that his gradual acquaintance with the work of Lukács, Goldman, Althusser and, later, Gramsci had alerted him to a new critical mode of Marxism that was not crudely deterministic or economic. He discovered a body of Marxist thought that challenged traditional Marxism's division of society into the base (the economic conditions) and the superstructure (the effects of the economic base, including culture). Critical Marxism complicated such a model by, for instance, insisting that culture was not merely a reflection of the economic base but could produce its *own* 'effects'. There, Williams (1977) found support for his formulation of culture as a 'constitutive social process, creating specific and different "ways of life"' (p. 19).

Williams, in effect, announces his conversion, and a whole range of theory becomes available to him that had hitherto been off limits. He admits the value of semiotics as a method of textual analysis (but still sees it as dealing with aesthetics); he notes the importance of Saussure's work (but worries at its rigid determinism); he acknowledges the importance of the economic determinations of culture, and outlines the means through which media institutions, for instance, can be studied; he offers a materialist definition of the category of literature, seeing it as a historical category of 'use and condition' rather than as an ideal, essential entity. But the most important development in *Marxism and Literature* is that Williams finally outlines his view of ideology.

When Williams breaks with the traditional Marxist division of base and superstructure, he does so in order to foreground the role of culture. He concludes the discussion of this issue in *Marxism and Literature* by saying that it is not the base or the superstructure we should be examining, but rather the processes that integrate them – the processes through which history and culture are determined. The examination of determination leads, inevit-

ably, to an examination of the mechanisms through which it is held to occur: mechanisms variously defined as the working of ideologies.

As Williams says, the problem of determination is the most intractable issue within Marxist thought, but his conclusions are characteristic. Rejecting more mechanistic schemes of determination, he opts for the Althusserian idea of 'overdetermination', a concept encountered briefly in Chapter 1 of this volume. Overdetermination allows for the 'relative autonomy' of cultural forces, and consequently explains the achievement of ideological domination as a struggle between competing and contradictory forces. For Williams, the virtue of Althusser's view of ideology over earlier versions is that it is able to acknowledge the importance and complexity of individual, 'lived' experience: 'the concept of "overdetermination" is more useful than any other way of understanding historically lived situations and the authentic complexities of practice' (p. 89). However, while this is true, Althusser finds it easier to explain how these relatively autonomous formations are necessarily subject to ideological forces than to explain how these forces can be resisted or dominant ideologies contested. Williams, like many others in the field, found an answer to this in Gramsci's theory of hegemony.

Gramsci's theory of hegemony holds that cultural domination or, more accurately, cultural leadership is not achieved by force or coercion, but is secured through the consent of those it will ultimately subordinate. The subordinated groups consent because they are convinced that this will serve their interests; they accept as 'common sense' the view of the world offered them by the dominant group. (Such a process, for instance, might explain how working-class voters in Britain could see Margaret Thatcher as identified with their interests.) Gramsci's insistence on the production of consent implies a cultural field that is composed through much more vigorous and dynamic struggle than that envisaged by Althusser. Cultural domination is the product of complex negotiations and alignments of interests; it is never simply imposed from above, nor is it inevitably produced through language or through ideological apparatuses such as the education system. The achievement of hegemony is sustained only through the continual winning of consent. (Further discussion of hegemony will be presented in Chapter 6.)

For Williams, the attraction of Gramsci's theory is that it both

includes and goes beyond two powerful earlier concepts: 'that of "culture" as a "whole social process", in which men define and shape their whole lives; and that of "ideology", in any of its Marxist senses, in which a system of meanings and values is the expression or projection of a particular class interest' (p. 108). The idea of hegemony connects, in a sense, the theory and practice of social process and provides us with ways of examining how specific formations of domination occur. Again, for Williams, the power of the theory is its ability to consider individual experience within history, to talk of culture as 'the lived dominance and subordination of particular classes', thus stitching history, experience, politics and ideology into the study of everyday life.

To develop this position further, and to emphasize the fact that domination is a process rather than a permanently achieved state, Williams identifies three kinds of cultural forces: the dominant, residual and emergent forces discernible at any one point and within any one historical juncture. These terms roughly correspond to the ideological forms of, respectively, the present, the past and the future. These cultural forces may be utterly antipathetic to each other's interests; by incorporating them into his schema, Williams is installing the notion of conflict, difference and contradiction as components within a theory of determination. As Williams says, domination must never be seen as total: 'No mode of production and therefore no dominant social order . . . ever in reality includes or exhausts all human practice, human energy, and human intention' (p. 125). It is fitting to conclude this necessarily partial survey of Williams' work with his insistence on political possibility, on the power of the human agent to change his or her conditions of existence. This has been the overriding concern in his work from the beginning.

Williams' acceptance of Marxism had an odd effect on his role in cultural studies. It is as if he accepted his place within a Marxist tradition only to disappear into it; his value over the last decade has been as a pioneer rather than as a leader. Critiques of his work argue that he never came up with a thoroughgoing statement of his position, or that he never developed methods for its application. Even the honesty of his work, openly revising his position, has been attacked as a flaw (see Eagleton 1978, 33). But Williams' work remains strikingly original and compelling reading even now, and his commitment to the political objectives of theoretical work was exemplary. For Williams, cultural studies was a

practice, not a profession, and his work remains an indispensable guide to the full range of developments to occur within British cultural studies during his lifetime.

E. P. THOMPSON AND CULTURALISM

Raymond Williams is normally, if a little problematically, located in the 'culturalist' tradition within British cultural studies; E. P. Thompson is a less equivocal representative of this tradition. Thompson's importance is not confined only to cultural studies, however. His book *The Making of the English Working Class* (1978a) has had a profound influence on the writing of British social history since its publication (it was first published in 1963) and has also been implicated in explorations of popular culture, class and subcultures from within sociology, anthropology and ethnography.

Unlike Williams, Thompson developed his theory of culture from within Marxist traditions. Although he left the Communist party around the time of the Soviet intervention in Hungary, the debates in which he engaged were debates within Marxism itself. However, there are many similarities between his position in 1963 and that of the Raymond Williams of *Culture and Society* and *The Long Revolution*: Thompson resisted simple notions of economic determinism, and the traditional base-superstructure model, in order to recover the importance of culture; he resisted simple notions of class domination and thus recovered the importance of human agency; he insisted on the importance of 'lived' culture and of subjective experience; and he maintained a basic humanism. Culture, for both men, was a lived network of practices and relationships that constituted everyday life, within which the role of the individual subject had to be foregrounded.

Thompson, more than Williams, developed his theory through practice, through his history of the making of culture by its subjects. A more important difference between the two was the conflict-based view of culture Thompson proposed, in opposition to the consensualizing view Williams offered in *Culture and Society* and *The Long Revolution*. Thompson resisted Williams' definition of culture as 'a whole way of life' in order to reframe it as a struggle between ways of life. Thompson's culture was constituted by the friction between competing interests and forces, mostly located in social class. Williams' residually Leavisite

view of culture was countered by Thompson's unequivocal definition of culture as popular culture, the culture of 'the people'. The intellectual project for Thompson was to rewrite the history of this culture in order to redress the imbalance of its representation in 'official' histories.

The Making of the English Working Class sets out its agenda explicitly in its opening pages; Thompson attacks orthodox labour and social histories for leaving out the working class, for remembering only the successful – 'those whose aspirations anticipated subsequent evolution': 'The blind alleys, the lost causes, and the losers themselves,' he says, 'are forgotten.' Thompson sets out to rescue the casualties of ruling class history, 'the poor stockinger, the Luddite cropper', from 'the enormous condescension of posterity'. His goal is not simply to recuperate the past:

In some of the lost causes of the people of the Industrial Revolution we may discover insights into social evils which we have yet to cure. Moreover, the greater part of the world today is still undergoing problems of industrialisation, and of the formation of democratic institutions, analogous in many ways to our own experience during the Industrial Revolution.

(Thompson 1978a, 13)

The result is a polemical, imaginative and richly readable account of the formation of a class and the specific discourses that gave its members' lives their meaning.

The immediate beneficiary of this work was not cultural studies; Thompson saw his work as directly examining 'the peculiarities of the English', and as such the project has been accepted and taken on (Johnson 1980, 48). There is now a strong tradition of British social history that is shaped by Thompson's work. Although Johnson (1980) has defined the historical and historiographic interests of the CCCS in roughly Thompsonian terms, emphasizing in particular the relevance of historical research to the analysis of the present, cultural studies has had reservations about Thompson's work and the work of historians generally. Furthermore, what reservations cultural studies had about the contribution of history were well and truly reciprocated in historians' distrust of European cultural theory. Thompson (1978b) himself proved to be an enthusiastic controversialist, and engaged in a decade of argument that culminated in *The Poverty of*

Theory in 1978. This field of conflict has been conventionalized as one between structuralism and culturalism.

Structuralism encouraged cultural studies theorists to see Thompson's (and, for that matter, Williams') concentration on individual experience and agency as romantic and regressively humanist. Since consciousness is culturally constructed, why waste time dealing with its individual contents when we can deal with its constitutive processes – language, for instance? Culturalists, on the other hand, saw structuralism as too abstract, rigid and mechanical to accommodate the lived complexities of cultural processes. Structuralists saw culturalists as lacking theory; culturalists saw structuralists as theoreticist. Culturalism was a home-grown movement, while structuralism was foreign. In the discipline of history, the controversy became quite specific: historians claimed, with some justice, that structuralism was ahistorical and thus denied the very processes historians examined; conversely, structuralists saw culturalist historians as theoretically naive in their understanding of cultural processes.

We can see this controversy displayed in the pages of the *History Workshop*, a journal that began in 1976, developing from a series of seminars and meetings that had been held under that title in Ruskin College, Oxford, since 1967. Explicitly socialist, its first issue carried not one but three editorials-cum-manifestos: the first proclaimed the journal's task as that of bringing 'the boundaries of history closer to people's lives' and counteracting the control of the academy over history; the second argued for the importance of feminist histories; and the third announced the end of an informal theoretical treaty by thanking sociology for its assistance in the past and claiming history would provide its own theoretical support in the future. The state of 'theory' within the study of history was thus constructed as an issue and a problem for the journal and the discipline.

By the late 1970s, some structuralist work was going on within history: on nineteenth-century popular culture, oral history and some aspects of ethnographic research. But there were still limits to the acceptability, in particular, of Althusserian notions of ideology. In 1978, Richard Johnson, by then at the CCCS, published an article in *History Workshop* proposing the benefits of structuralism to historians and, among other things, accusing Thompson of 'preferring experience to theory'. The journal was deluged with letters. Johnson was accused of historical illiteracy, a slavish

Althusserianism, a barren and empty theoreticism, and an excessive antihumanism. One of the journal's editors contributed a letter saying he never wanted the article published anyway, while another (affiliated with the Birmingham Centre's work) expressed disgust at the shrillness of the response. While Johnson might have been seen as a champion of history *within* cultural studies, clearly he was still seen as something of a heretic by historians (see *History Workshop*, Vol. 7, 1979). There was a rematch between Thompson and Johnson at the notorious *History Workshop* conference in 1979, and again the arguments merely exposed the depth of the division between culturalism and structuralism.

A possible effect of this fissure may have been historians' subsequent tendency to avoid analyses of contemporary popular culture and anything that might look like textual analysis. Other consequences have been more worthwhile; the culturalist emphasis on individual experience, the 'making' of culture, fed into ethnographic work on subcultures within the mainstream of cultural studies (examples of this work can be seen in Bennett *et al.* 1981; Hall and Jefferson 1976). As Hall, Johnson and Bennett have all indicated, however, and as we saw in our account of Williams' theoretical development, Gramsci's theory of hegemony has resolved many of the points at issue between structuralists and culturalists, particularly the sticking points of determination and social change. What Bennett calls 'the turn to Gramsci' effectively consigned the culturalism-structuralism split to the past (see Bennett *et al.* 1986, Introduction) and opened the way for cultural studies to recover the usefulness of history. Nevertheless, disciplinary tensions remain. At the 'Cultural Studies Now and in the Future' conference in Illinois, 1990, Carolyn Steedman (1992) challenged cultural studies to explain why it *wanted* history, implying that this was by no means evident from cultural studies practice. (The most elegant answer to this challenge came from Meaghan Morris, who replied 'in the culture I live in history is the name of the space where we define what matters'.)

STUART HALL

An index of Stuart Hall's importance to contemporary formations of British cultural studies is that the detailed discussion of his work since the mid-1970s occurs within subsequent chapters rather than within this survey. But some account of Hall's earlier

work should be given here, if only because his theoretical history closely parallels that of British cultural studies itself. An early editor of *New Left Review*, and a secondary school teacher before he became an academic, Hall was among the speakers at the 1960 NUT conference on popular culture and the media. His first book, *The Popular Arts* (Hall and Whannel 1967; first published in Britain in 1964), was deeply indebted to Hoggart and Williams; he joined the CCCS as Hoggart's deputy in 1966 and replaced Hoggart as director in 1969. During his decade as director, Hall oversaw a tremendous expansion in the theoretical base and intellectual influence of the CCCS. The structuralist enterprise could be said to find its focus there, and the development of both the ethnographic and the media studies strands in cultural studies is clearest there. Cultural studies' development of its distinctive combination of Althusserian and Gramscian theories of ideology and hegemony owes a significant debt to the CCCS and Hall's own work. Hall is now professor of sociology at the Open University and continues to be an influential figure within cultural studies (especially in the new American constructions of the field), a consistent critic of the ideologies and public policies of successive Conservative governments in Britain, and a key figure in the debates around the reorientation of the Left in Europe.

Hall has been on quite a theoretical journey, then. His first book, coauthored with Paddy Whannel, stands in clearest relation to the culture and civilization tradition. There are some key differences, however. *The Popular Arts* is relatively free of the nostalgia and organicism of Leavisite texts, even of the diluted variants found in *The Uses of Literacy* and *Culture and Society*. In fact, Hall and Whannel (1967) explicitly reject the conventional contrast between the 'organic culture of pre-industrial England with the mass-produced culture of today':

This is a perspective that has produced a penetrating critique of industrial society but as a guide to action it is restrictive. The old culture has gone because the way of life that produced it has gone. The rhythms of work have been permanently altered and the enclosed small-scale communities are vanishing. It may be important to resist unnecessary increases in scale and to re-establish local initiatives where we can; but if we wish to re-create a genuine popular culture we must seek out the points of growth within the society that now exists.

(p. 38)

As a result of this position, Hall and Whannel are much more interested in dealing with popular cultural forms on their own terms than are any of their predecessors. *The Popular Arts* strikes the note taken up 13 years later by Fiske and Hartley in *Reading Television* (1978) that 'the kind of attention we must pay to [in this case, film's] visual qualities is the equivalent of the attention we give to verbal images, rhythms and so on, in our reading' (p. 44). This kind of attention alerts Hall and Whannel to properties of popular forms missed by earlier commentators; their analysis of the signifying function of film stars, for instance, predates Dyer's work by many years but comes to very similar conclusions about the contradiction between a star's typicality and individuality (p. 213). (Dyer's work is dealt with in Chapter 3.)

The Popular Arts is still aimed at developing strategies of discrimination, however. Its advance on Hoggart is that it rejects the idea that the media necessarily and inevitably produce rubbish; as a result, Hall and Whannel's aim is to discriminate *among* the products of the media, not *against* them (p. 15). In order to theorize the artistic possibilities provided within various popular forms, Hall and Whannel develop the influential distinction between popular art (which derives from folk cultures) and mass art (which does not): 'The typical "art" of the mass media today is not a continuity from, but a corruption of, popular art,' they say. 'Mass art has no personal quality but, instead, a high degree of personalisation' (p. 68). Although *The Popular Arts* means well, and intends to legitimate 'good' popular art by proposing a historic relation between the form and the culture, it does have problems. As frameworks for aesthetic judgement, its formulations are doomed to expose many contradictions and inevitably to discount the specific pleasures offered by popular cultural forms (familiarity and repetition in popular fiction or television, for instance) no matter how good the intentions. Finally, and once again, the book is limited by the lack of more appropriate analytical tools than those provided by Leavisite literary analysis.

Hall spent the next few years revising his position. Evidence of the comprehensiveness of this revision can be found in 'Television as a Medium and Its Relation to Culture'. This article was published as a CCCS stencilled paper in 1973, but it was originally prepared as part of a report on TV for UNESCO in 1971. One has to deduce UNESCO's brief from the discussion, but it seems to have required the consideration of how television might be

enlisted to support the popularization or dissemination of high art – 'Culture'. The article makes skilled, confident and early use of semiotics and its various formulations in the work of Barthes, Wollen and Pierce. It also radically rewrites Hall's position from *The Popular Arts*. Rather than arguing for 'better' television through the adaptation of high art, for instance, Hall argues that the UNESCO brief misunderstands the relation between the medium and the culture. *Popular* television is the centre of this relation and to persist in attempting to integrate the domains of art and popular television is 'anachronistic'. He concludes: 'Television invites us, not to serve up the traditional dishes of culture more effectively, but to make real the Utopian slogan which appeared in May 1968, adorning the walls of the Sorbonne, "Art is dead. Let us create everyday life"' (p. 113). This flamboyant final flourish is perhaps a little of its time, but the deployment of the phrase 'everyday life' is strategic, invoking the enterprise of cultural studies.

In the same year, 1971, a paper Hall delivered to the British Sociological Association, 'Deviancy, Politics and the Media', displays the influence of structuralism and semiotics. To support his attack on American media research, Hall uses the work of Lévi-Strauss, Barthes, Althusser and Gramsci. These two papers provide evidence of Hall's early interest in European theory, much of it unavailable in English translation, and certainly not widely deployed within the disciplines from which cultural studies was emerging.⁸ Indeed, part of Hall's role within cultural studies has been as a conduit through which European structuralist theory reached British researchers and theorists; in the United States, now, he seems to be serving that role for British transformations of that theory.

A substantial proportion of Hall's writings are available as chapters within readers published through the CCCS, or as individual journal articles. He is an editor and coauthor of many of these readers, and is the coauthor of probably the most thorough and magisterial application of cultural studies theory so far, *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State, and Law and Order* (Hall et al. 1978). In this book, Hall's own background (West Indian) must have played a part in recovering the issue of race as one of concern to cultural studies: surprisingly, perhaps, issues of race and empire have not been at the forefront of his published work over the years. The analysis of the media, the investigation of

practices of resistance within subcultures, and the public construction of political power in Britain have been his overriding concerns. It is difficult for students to form a sense of the body of Hall's work, however; so far he has not been the sole author of a book-length project. Collections of his key articles have been advertised from time to time but so far none have appeared. His work will be further discussed in later chapters: in particular, his theories of textual and ideological analysis of the media, his theorizing of the category of ideology, and his contributions to analysis of institutions and their cultural/political effects.

THE BIRMINGHAM CENTRE FOR CONTEMPORARY CULTURAL STUDIES

This is a history not only of individual contributors but also of institutions. While there are now numerous institutions around the world participating in and reshaping the field of cultural studies, the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies can justifiably claim to be the key institution in the history of the field. The Centre's publications have made strategic contributions to academic and public awareness, and in sheer volume dominate the field. A high proportion of the authors listed in the bibliography at the end of this book have worked at, studied within, or are in some way affiliated with the Centre and its work; examples of such individuals include Dick Hebdige, Dorothy Hobson, David Morley, Phil Cohen, Chas Critcher, Charlotte Brunson, Iain Chambers, Janice Winship, Paul Willis, Angela McRobbie, Richard Hoggart, Richard Johnson, Stuart Laing and Stuart Hall. While the specifics of its definitions of cultural studies might well be (and are) contested, the Centre's claim to a special influence on the field's development is beyond argument.

The CCCS was established at the University of Birmingham in 1964. Hoggart was its first director, and clearly his work was seen as the major focus of its attention. The CCCS was to direct itself to cultural forms, practices and institutions, and 'their relation to society and social change' (Hall *et al.* 1980) (see figure 2.1). Given such a brief, it is little wonder that both the English and the Sociology Departments at Birmingham saw the CCCS as a potential threat (Hall 1990). In conjunction with history, English and sociology were the two foundational disciplines cultural studies was to raid for approaches as well as for objects of critique.

Perhaps fortunately, given the consequent sensitivities, the CCCS confined itself to postgraduate research for most of its history. Until relatively recently it offered no undergraduate degree programme in cultural studies.

Centre for
Contemporary
Cultural Studies

University of
Birmingham

WORKING
PAPERS IN
CULTURAL
STUDIES

SPRING 1971



Figure 2.1 Cover of the first issue of the CCCS journal, *Working Papers in Cultural Studies* (Used with permission)

As the above discussions of the work of Hoggart, Williams and Hall during the 1960s make clear, Hoggart's project of understanding the everyday, 'lived' cultures of particular classes was overtaken by interest in the mass media, which quickly came to dominate the Centre's research and has provided it with its long-running focus. Initially, this work was heavily influenced by

American communication research; as with Williams' *Communications*, the existence of a well-developed body of work in the United States encouraged its adaptation to British topics. While this tradition continued to influence another key centre, Leicester's Centre for Mass Communication Research, the CCCS (like Williams) broke with the American influence, with the culture and civilization tradition, and with the empirical aspects of social science research. It moved towards the analysis of the ideological function of the media; within such analysis, the media were defined as a 'major cultural and ideological force', 'standing in a dominant position with respect to the way in which social relations and political problems were defined and the production and transformations of popular ideologies in the audience addressed' (Hall 1980d, 117). The result was a concentration on the ideological 'effectivity' of the media (a more general and indirect idea of the process of determination) rather than on their behavioural 'effects'. This was an inquiry into structures of power, the 'politics' of the media.

Stuart Hall's replacement of Richard Hoggart as director centrally influenced this shift of emphasis. Under Hall's leadership, the relations between media and ideology were investigated through the analysis of signifying systems in texts. Other kinds of work also prospered. Histories of 'everyday life' drew on Thompson's work, but also appropriated ethnographic approaches from sociology and anthropology. For some years such interests were focused on subcultures, examining their construction, their relation to their parent and dominant cultures, and their histories of resistance and incorporation. Much of this work examined the rituals and practices that generated meaning and pleasure within, precisely, that fragment of the cultural field Hoggart had dismissed in *The Uses of Literacy*: urban youth subcultures. Feminist research also benefited from some applications of this subcultural approach, using it to examine aspects of women's cultural subordination. Interaction between research on feminine subcultures and on the ways audiences negotiated their own meanings and pleasures from popular television has provided a platform for revisions of our understanding of 'the feminine' and of television. And concurrent with all this, work on class histories, histories of popular culture, and popular memory also continued.

Hall was succeeded by Richard Johnson in 1979. Johnson

(1983) has noted some discontinuities between the principles followed under Hall and under his own directorship. Textual analysis gave way to a sharper focus on history as the centrality of the need to examine everyday life was reaffirmed. Johnson's own interests were focused on the historical construction of subjectivities rather than on media texts. Somewhat paradoxically, Johnson has expressed scepticism about the rich tradition of ethnographic work within the CCCS. While the work of certain individuals (Hebdige and Willis, for two) is exempted from this scepticism, Johnson (1983, 46-48) has represented ethnography as relatively untheorized, while noting its tendencies towards an elitist paternalism. This latter point derives from what is seen as the arrogance implicit in wandering into someone else's culture and assuming its transparency before one's own methods of analysis. It is a criticism ethnographers themselves have raised.

Johnson passed the directorship on to Jorge Lorrain. The nature of the CCCS has changed substantially since the late 1980s. Under university pressure to be reabsorbed into the Department of English, the CCCS embarked on an international campaign to generate support for its survival. It won the battle but it may not have won the war. The Centre became a Department of Cultural Studies, offering undergraduate programmes in the field. The staff was augmented by the collapse and dispersal of the University of Birmingham's Sociology Department; two members joined the Department of Cultural Studies. Currently, like so many others, the Centre's staff must divide its time between undergraduate and postgraduate teaching and research.

The CCCS has exerted an influence far beyond what anyone could have expected. At any one time it has had only a handful of staff - never more than three until conversion into a Department. But it adopted a policy of encouraging its students to publish their work rather than produce assignments - or even finish their degrees! While this did little for the Centre's 'academic throughput figures', it did make the work visible, disseminating the fruits of its research and establishing the reputations of its students. The CCCS also operated through reading and research groups rather than through formal courses.⁹ Most of its publications bear the marks of this collectivist practice, a practice that clearly served the research function exceptionally well, while presumably making the teaching and assessment of student work something of a problem. It seems inevitable that the introduction

of undergraduate teaching, with defined and programmed course units, will affect the Centre's work, reducing its output, and possibly its influence, considerably.

OTHER 'CENTRES'

Birmingham is not the only research centre devoted to cultural studies, of course. At the time it was established, a number of other developments also institutionalized an interest in media and popular culture. The Centre for Television Research was set up at Leeds in 1966, and the first chair in film studies in Britain was founded at the University of London in 1967. Possibly of greatest importance was the Centre for Mass Communication Research at the University of Leicester, established in 1966. Halloran *et al.*'s (1970) analysis of the media treatment of the 1968 demonstrations (*Demonstrations and Communications*) was a ground-breaking work, and influenced subsequent connections between politics and the media at Birmingham (see Hall *et al.* 1980, 119). The Leicester centre was initially heavily influenced by empiricist communication theory, and then by media sociology and political economy, so its relation to cultural studies has been occasional rather than systematic.

Work within the Leicester centre and the CCCS helped to revive a strand of British media sociology that dealt with the media institutions. Institutional studies of media production such as Schlesinger's *Putting 'Reality' Together* (1978) appeared during the 1970s, investigating how the industrial production of news is ideologically constrained. Such work was generated by a particular interest in the way politics was represented in the media. Between 1974 and 1982 the Glasgow Media Group, a collective at the University of Glasgow, applied both empirical and interpretative methods to news reports on such topics as the economy, unions and the Labour party; their analyses appear in *Bad News* (1976), *More Bad News* (1980) and *Really Bad News* (1982). The collective no longer exists, but it exerted considerable pressure on the BBC and gained widespread attention within the media in the latter half of the 1970s.

A significant institutionalization of the study of the media in Britain was the Open University's Mass Communication and Society course, which began in 1977. Here a great deal of the work being done in the various British research traditions was

published, collected or disseminated. Of even greater importance for cultural studies was the establishment of the Open University's degree programme in popular culture, U203, Popular Culture, which ran from 1982 to 1987. This course drew on history, sociology and literary studies as well as cultural studies, and clearly benefited from the fact that Stuart Hall had moved to the Open University as Professor of Sociology in 1979. The U203 course 'readers' have, like the CCCS publications, assisted in the definition of the field by providing students with access to materials otherwise widely dispersed and difficult to find. Indeed, Jim McGuigan (1992) has suggested the Open University reader, *Culture, Ideology and Social Process* (1981), which contained a digest of Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks*, was where the concept of hegemony was first 'popularized'. The work of Tony Bennett, Stuart Hall, Colin Mercer, Janet Woollacott, James Curran, Michael Gurevitch and many others went into the Open University courses and into the collections that defined and exported the enterprise. For many outside Britain, the Open University course readers have provided the most accessible and coherent account of the work going on in British cultural studies. Within Britain, some recent books (Harris 1992; McGuigan 1992) have argued that U203 was of comparable significance to the CCCS in the formation of British cultural studies.

As we have already seen in the case of the *History Workshop* and *Working Papers in Cultural Studies*, journals have played a significant role in this history. *New Left Review* provided a forum for local and international debates as well as translations of European work. *Theory, Culture and Society*, which commenced in 1982, published cultural studies articles and acted as an interrogator of the field: not only of its tendency towards literary/aesthetic modes of analysis but also of how far 'the sociology of culture should be coterminous with Marxist approaches', as its first editorial put it. *Marxism Today* has led the way in the analysis of 'New Times' (dealt with briefly in Chapter 7), publishing cultural studies' critiques of the threat represented by, and the inadequacy of the Left's response to, Thatcherism. The film journal, *Screen* (formerly *Screen Education*), made substantial theoretical contributions to the textual analysis of film and television. It maintained close links with European semiotic and structuralist theory, but its avant-garde privileging of the 'progressive' text recalled elite interpretations of popular culture and exposed it to extended

controversies with members of the CCCS – particularly David Morley (1980b).

No intellectual movement is monolithic, no attempt to describe its essential features uncontested. There are certainly more contributing streams shaping the field of cultural studies than I have listed above. In later chapters, I will be adopting further, complicating, perhaps contradictory, and more contemporary perspectives on this history. For the moment, however, and rather than continue this list until all interests are satisfied, I want to close by acknowledging some of the more marginalized, but significant, contributions over the 1970s and 1980s. Feminist work on media audiences developed, almost single-handedly, a critique of conventional accounts of the function of TV soap operas for female viewers. Dorothy Hobson, Charlotte Brunson and (from Holland) Ien Ang's work has been incorporated into the mainstream of media studies, convincingly challenging the orthodoxies on the pleasures offered by popular television. Angela McRobbie mounted a most effective critique of subcultural studies, including her own early work, as discounting the feminine. Some feminist writers appealed directly to a general audience, through columns in magazines and newspapers, in order to articulate their critique of masculinist representations. Judith Williamson and Ros Coward, for instance, enjoyed little institutional support but waged an extremely effective guerrilla war on the media industries as freelance writers.¹⁰

Another margin, for some time, seems to have had a physical location, in Cardiff, where Terence Hawkes, John Fiske, Christopher Norris and John Hartley all worked. Neither Fiske nor Hartley make much of an appearance in British cultural studies' bibliographies until 1978, when their *Reading Television* appears as a member of Methuen's New Accents series, edited by Terence Hawkes. Fiske was taken up by Methuen as editor of its Studies in Communication series, which has published Hartley and other Cardiff alumni Tim O'Sullivan and Danny Saunders. Both *Reading Television* and the series have been influential teaching texts in colleges and universities, but Fiske and Hartley enjoy much higher profiles in the United States and Australia than they do in the United Kingdom. It seems possible that the field of study has been subject to a degree of metropolitan control and that there are geographical margins as well as theoretical or ideological ones. It may be significant that Fiske and Hartley both

extended their marginality by moving to Australia; there is a comforting symmetry in the fact that the journal they helped develop in Australia, the *Australian Journal of Cultural Studies*, has itself been returned to 'the centre' as the international journal, *Cultural Studies*.

The importance of Methuen's rescuing this group from the margins and placing them in their preferred export bag is not to be underestimated. Publishing firms are institutions, too, and Methuen's (now Routledge) move into cultural studies and literary theory in the mid-1970s provided an outlet for the work of many who are now key figures in cultural studies theory and practice, while the establishment of the two series (Studies in Communication and New Accents) helped to stake out a market. For those who developed their understanding of cultural studies through publishers' leaflets and bookshop bulletins, the accumulation of titles on the Methuen list constituted a map of the field. While this field is now more closely related to pedagogic outcomes than many would like, Methuen/Routledge faces considerable competition and publishing opportunities in cultural studies have increased. Being marginal is not quite as easy as it used to be.