

Prison Notebooks (Hoare and Nowell-Smith, 1971) in a novel and fertile manner.

- 13 The authoritarian populism thesis derived from Gramsci's theory of hegemony, Poulantzas's analysis of authoritarian statism and Laclau's account of populism and popular-democratic struggle. See Hall's 'Popular-democratic vs authoritarian populism', originally published in 1980 and reprinted in Hall (1988a), and his elegant discussion of how to explain Thatcherism (1988b).
- 14 See Bob Jessop *et al.* (1990) for further elaboration on their critique of the authoritarian populism thesis, and Colin Leys (1990) for a commentary, defending the neo-Gramscian account.

Trajectories of cultural populism

Although populist sentiment in contemporary cultural thought ranges across otherwise divergent positions, these positions share a commonly negative response to the elitist critique of mass culture, which has ideological origins that stretch back to the ancient Greek patrician's fear of the plebeian 'crowd' (Giner 1976). In the modern era, the mass culture critique was theorised and spread widely as educated common sense. The most conservative versions, dating from the nineteenth century, stressed an absolute division between inferior majorities and refined minorities. For example, the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche had this to say:

In every healthy society there are three types which condition each other and gravitate differently physiologically; each has its own hygiene, its own field of work, its own sense of perfection and mastery. Nature, not Manu, distinguishes the pre-eminently spiritual ones, those who are pre-eminently strong in muscle and temperament, and those, the third type, who excel neither in one respect nor the other, the mediocre ones – the last as the great majority, the first as the elite.

(1888: 645)

Nietzsche believed that 'the mediocre' of his day would have been happy in their mediocrity if it were not for 'the socialist rabble' stirring up false ideas of equality in their inherently feeble minds. In these circumstances, 'the pre-eminently strong in muscle and temperament' had a job to do on behalf of 'the pre-eminently spiritual ones'. Shorn of Nietzsche's belligerence, social and cultural thought rooted in such neo-aristocratic sensibility has provided a set of springs for a very strange assortment of

bedfellows during the twentieth century, not only conservatives (like Ortega, Gasset and T.S. Eliot) but also liberals and socialists (see Swingewood 1977; Bennett 1982; Brantlinger 1983; Ross 1989), and, latterly, the ex-leftist 'new philosophers' of Paris (Hughes 1990). To explicate cultural populism's 'difference', however, it is the liberal and radical versions that require the closest examination.

In Victorian Britain, both Matthew Arnold (1970) and John Stuart Mill (1974) were worried that democratic emancipation, which as good liberals they supported in principle, would lower standards of culture and of political discourse. As a solution, Arnold recommended the aesthetic education of 'the masses', a recommendation put into practice with great fervour, especially from the 1920s onwards, by English literary criticism's petit bourgeois 'discrimination' strategy. The Leavisites, in particular, complained about the morally debilitating effects of mass communication, the threat posed not only by newly burgeoning commercial media but even the early BBC! To stem the tide, F.R. Leavis and Denys Thompson published a seminal guidebook for teachers of English and History, *Culture and Environment*.

Those who in school are offered (perhaps) the beginnings of education in taste are exposed out of school to the competing exploitation of the cheapest emotional responses; films, newspapers, publicity in all its forms, commercially catered fiction – all offering satisfaction at its lowest level, and inculcate the choosing of the most immediate pleasures, got with the least effort We cannot, as we might in a healthy state of culture, leave the citizen to be formed unconsciously by his [sic] environment; if anything like a worthy idea of satisfactory living is to be saved, he must be trained to discriminate and resist.

(1933: 3, 5)

These words, 'discriminate and resist', ring out across the decades in the study of mass-popular culture. In spite of its extremely limiting consequences for cultural education, the strategy advocated by the Leavisites did have the distinct virtue of at least putting the products of the modern media on the curriculum, albeit once there only to be derided by the all-knowing teacher. The discrimination strategy framed the cultural debate into which Raymond Williams intervened during the 1950s and was still setting the agenda when the National Union of Teachers held its

conference on 'Popular Culture and Personal Responsibility' in 1960 (Lusted 1985). Both Williams's book, *Communications* (1962), and the book edited by Denys Thompson, *Discrimination and Popular Culture* (1964), also much-read, emanated from that conference.

The most theoretically sophisticated version of cultural elitism came, however, from the Left, specifically the neo-Hegelian Frankfurt School of Social Research, which was exiled in the United States during the Hitler period. It was, in fact, these radical scholars who coined the term 'mass culture', originally suggested to Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno by the Nazi propaganda machine but encountered again, in a rather different form, when they arrived, as suspicious European intellectuals, in the 'New World'. They believed that under liberal democratic conditions the capitalist media were being used to manipulate 'the masses' and consumer culture to buy them off, thereby suppressing critical reason and eliminating the possibilities of revolutionary social change: 'In democratic countries, the final decision no longer rests with the educated but with the amusement industry. Popularity consists of the unrestricted accommodation of the people to what the amusement industry thinks they like' (Horkheimer 1941: 303). The Frankfurt School's ideological critique rested upon a conception of mass-mediated knowledge and, more insidiously, mass-popular pleasure as somehow essentially alienating. For instance, Adorno (1941) notoriously attacked the vogue for jazz bands and jitterbugging from this rarified standpoint. He completely failed, as is well known, to appreciate the radical roots of black music. By the 1950s, Adorno (1954) was also denouncing what he considered to be the psychological damage caused by television's anti-aesthetic.

In the late 1940s, Adorno and Horkheimer (1947) had replaced the concept of 'mass culture' in their theoretical discourse with 'the culture industry' (Jhally 1989). The latter concept was supposed to be more damning since it combined two incompatible terms – 'culture' and 'industry' – whereas 'mass culture' might be misconstrued as authentically proletarian (by suggesting the Leninist sense of 'the masses'). Curiously, the now banal insight that popular culture is produced industrially, distributed and consumed according to commercial imperatives in a capitalist economy, is probably critical theory's most incisive and enduring contribution (Garnham 1987; Bronner and Kellner 1989; Jameson

1990). On the other hand, the persistently negative connotations of 'mass culture' render it much less usable, most certainly for cultural populism.

One of the earliest theoretical responses to a taken-for-grantedly demeaning view of ordinary people's tastes and pleasures was the American structural functionalist (Shils 1971; Gans 1974) challenge to the literary intellectuals' Frankfurt School-influenced (MacDonald 1953) critique of mass culture (Ross 1989).¹ This mainstream American sociological position of the 1950s, with its uncritical account of the system-stabilising 'functions' of popular culture, has been unwittingly echoed by British cultural populism, as we shall see. But, before considering that, let us return to the classic populist critique of 'mass communication', a term closely connected to the idea of 'mass culture':

There are in fact no masses; there are only ways of seeing people as masses What we see, neutrally, is other people, many others, people unknown to us. In practice, we mass them, and interpret them, according to some convenient formula. Within its terms, the formula will hold. Yet it is the formula, not the mass, which is our real business to examine [It is founded in] a concept of society which relegates the majority of its members to mob status. The idea of the masses is an expression of this conception, and the idea of mass communication a comment on its functioning.

(Williams 1958: 289, 293)

Raymond Williams himself never altered his judgement that the 'mass' formula should be scrupulously avoided because of its irredeemable association with contemptuous elitism and 'mob' psychology (Heath and Skirrow 1986). Although sympathetic to Williams's argument, John Corner (1979) has proposed that such terminology can still be used neutrally to refer to large-scale distribution of messages in complex societies without necessarily carrying unwarranted assumptions concerning audience homogeneity and passivity; and indeed it is frequently used thus, quite unobjectionably, in the literature.

Having outlined some of the key themes of 'cultural elitism', I want now to trace the two main trajectories of its opposite, 'cultural populism', in Britain since the late 1950s. The first trajectory is on the cusp of the mass-culture critique and cultural

populism proper, represented by the work of Richard Hoggart and Jeremy Seabrook but given a more radically populist meaning by the movement for 'cultural democracy' from the 1970s, illustrated here by the ideas of Su Braden and John McGrath. Ultimately, the first trajectory arrives at a position which opposes popular cultural production almost entirely to mass cultural consumption. The second trajectory, exemplified by hegemony theory in the 1980s, retained a critical tension between 'popular culture' and 'mass culture', forging a dialectical perspective on symbolic exchange until, however, under the strain of its own internal contradictions, the synthesis imploded and ultimately dissolved in the work of some authors, most notably John Fiske, into an uncritical celebration of mass-popular cultural consumption, a position which James Curran (1990) and Philip Schlesinger (1991) have labelled 'the new revisionism'. At the end of the chapter, I shall review the principal objections to this terminally uncritical populism.

'UNBENDING THE SPRINGS OF ACTION'

Richard Hoggart's celebrated and widely read book, *The Uses of Literacy* (1957), more than any other publication, shifted the cultural debate in Britain from a stark opposition between elitist minority culture and lowly mass culture towards a serious engagement with the value and the values of majority cultural experience. Hoggart made influential discriminations *within* the field of ordinary people's culture (see his 'Culture: dead and alive', reprinted in Hoggart 1970a), discriminations that were then inscribed into the work of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, founded by him on assuming the professorship of English at Birmingham University in 1963 (Corner 1991). Peter Wiles (1969) has called Hoggart an 'urban populist'. Hoggart's 'populism', however, was extremely qualified: first, by his distinctly 'English' contempt for commercially imposed 'mass culture', the critical implications of which he never pursued with the vigour of Jeremy Seabrook; and, second, by his antipathy to the radical populism of the 'cultural democracy' movement in publicly subsidised community arts.

Read now, *The Uses of Literacy* seems less daring than Roland Barthes's *Mythologies*, published that same year in France. Barthes's semiological method allied to a critique of ideology yielded a series

of scintillating essays on the codes of wrestling, press photography, cinema and so on. They demythologise the naturalising ruses of mass-distributed popular culture and manage to circumvent the pedestrian Anglo-American mass culture debate (Barthes 1972). Hoggart's tone, in comparison, is one of a secular priest legitimated by his own humble origins, his scholarship-boy background and the judgemental idiom of Leavisite criticism. He read the English working class as fleeting figures in a landscape (that the Penguin paperback edition had a Lowry on the cover from the 1960s is not irrelevant), and he railed against the pernicious impact of specifically 'American' mass culture, which was, in his judgement, 'unbending the springs of action'.

The Uses of Literacy is divided into two parts. Part One, entitled 'An "old" order', is an impressionistic reflection on community life in the industrial North of England: Hoggart himself came from Leeds and grew up in Chapeltown and Hunslet, providing his book with a strong sense of locality. Part Two, entitled 'Yielding place to the new', is a critical reading of mass publications and includes some sideways swipes at milk bars, frequented by the young, and their blaring juke boxes. The basic theme of the book is the erosion of the old culture by the new:

My argument is not that there was, in England one generation ago, an urban culture still very much 'of the people' and that now there is only a mass culture. It is rather that appeals made by the mass publicists are for a great number of reasons made more insistently, effectively, and in a more comprehensive and centralised form today than they were earlier; that we are moving towards the creation of a mass culture; that the remnants of what was at least in parts an urban culture 'of the people' are being destroyed; and that the new mass culture is in important ways less healthy than the often crude culture it is replacing.

(1957: 24)

Hoggart's nostalgic recollections of his own childhood and his account of the residual customs, habits and irreverent 'them' and 'us' attitudes of the white working class living in terraced cottages and meeting out on the street evoked the world still conjured up many years later by the long-running television serial, *Coronation Street* (1960-), a neighbourly and vibrant existence, ordinary people making the best of their situation without too much

emphasis on squalor, cultural difference and social conflict (Critcher 1979; Dyer *et al.* 1981). Like *Coronation Street*, the appearance of Hoggart's book was timely, coinciding with the moment when urban planners, fired by the promise of modernity, were in fact transforming the communal space of that intimate way of life with slum clearances, the building of green-belt estates and inner-city tower blocks. In the second part of the book that he had originally wanted to call *The Abuses of Literacy*, Hoggart's literary readings of the newer genre fiction and magazines are very critical indeed of their, to him, degraded sentiments, yet as he eventually confessed in his autobiography, the examples quoted were, in fact, invented by himself at the request of his publisher, who was anxious about libel (Hoggart 1990). The methodological validity of the exercise notwithstanding, Hoggart's work did anticipate both the ethnographic and textual analysis strands of subsequent cultural studies.

The success of Hoggart's book with 'the general reader' turned him into a pivotal figure *institutionally* and very nearly a household name.² And, at Birmingham University, he was able to introduce popular cultural study as an addition to the main business of academic English. His inaugural lecture, 'Schools of English and contemporary society' (reprinted in Hoggart 1970b), set out the programme for the new research centre, of which there were to be three kinds of enquiry: historical and philosophical; sociological; literary critical. The point was to 'evaluate' the forms of popular culture, determine their place in society and clear up the 'muddle' of the cultural debate. In 1964 the Birmingham Centre's first report listed the initial seven projects to be undertaken:

- 1 Orwell and the Climate of the Thirties
- 2 The Growth and Change in the Local Press
- 3 Folk Song and Folk Idioms in Popular Music
- 4 Levels of Fiction and Changes in Contemporary Society
- 5 Domestic Art and Iconography in the Home
- 6 Pop Music and Adolescent Culture
- 7 The Meaning of Sport and its Presentation.

(CCCS 1964: 6-7)

This was an ambitious and wide-ranging programme of research, especially considering that the Centre had very little money except for a small grant from Penguin Books, which funded a research fellowship.

Hoggart's distinction between the 'processed' and the 'lived' in 'popular culture', against an undifferentiated and prejudicial notion of 'mass culture' as a basis for discriminating judgement (Hoggart 1970a: 130), was applied by the Centre's research fellow, Stuart Hall (in an earlier incarnation from the one discussed in the last chapter). Hall wrote *The Popular Arts*, yet another guidebook for teachers of English, with Paddy Whannel, education officer at the British Film Institute:

In terms of actual quality (and it is with this, rather than with 'effects', that we are principally concerned) the struggle between what is good and worthwhile and what is shoddy and debased is not a struggle against the modern forms of communication, but a conflict within these media If we believe that one of the central purposes of education is to train the ability to discriminate, then we can see that the introduction of the study of the popular arts into the curriculum is less the imposition of a new subject than an extension of this basic aim to cover new and highly relevant areas of experience.

(Hall and Whannel 1964: 15, 388-9)

The Leavisite terminology and solemn moral purpose hardly require comment. However, Hall and Whannel were at pains to distance their approach from that of F.R. Leavis and Denys Thompson, informed as they were by Williams's stress on 'ordinary culture' and Hoggart's discriminations. Hall and Whannel, in contrast to the unreconstructed Leavisites of the 1960s, were not so perturbed that most young people watched television, listened to pop music and went to the cinema, instead of reading 'good literature', visiting art galleries and attending classical music concerts. They advocated a 'widening' of the English curriculum to help students develop a discriminating attitude to their preferred forms and media. Teachers should introduce them, for instance, to the classics of European cinema and draw their attention to the *auteurs* of Hollywood in order to broaden their experience. Len Masterman (1980) later produced a devastating critique of this modified 'discrimination' strategy, its still-confidence-sapping judgementalism and imposition of teacherly taste. But, in the early 1960s, Hall and Whannel's *The Popular Arts* was at the forefront of progressive education. The turn to 'the popular arts' and the cinema in particular had already been given an official nod of approval by the 1963 Newsom Report, *Half Our*

Future, concerned with working-class underachievement: and it was in this space that subsequent developments in film, television and media education occurred. These academic and educational trajectories should not, however, be taken as the only strands of thought on the cusp of the mass culture critique and cultural populism.

Although Hoggart opened up the study of popular texts and contexts, his own position was always embattled and became increasingly unfashionable, from the late 1960s, in the intellectual circles that he had once inspired, mainly due to his gloomy prognosis that mass culture was overwhelming the authentically popular. Such populist pessimism, however, was taken much further than Hoggart by the passionate jeremiads of Jeremy Seabrook. Seabrook and his occasional co-author, Trevor Blackwell, are strangely marginal to academic cultural studies (in spite of the fact that Blackwell himself studied at the Birmingham Centre in the 1970s). If mentioned at all, they are usually dismissed peremptorily. For instance, Alan Tomlinson (1990a) has observed acidly that Seabrook and Hoggart both represent 'a sad, dislocated, elitist, and perhaps menopausal, critique' (p. 17). In my opinion, Seabrook is not so conveniently sectioned off, since he enunciates a sensibility that has considerable social and political resonance.

Seabrook writes in a documentary mode which validates general argument with the words of ordinary people. His early books, such as *City Close-up* (1971), are composed mainly of lengthy passages of quoted speech from interviews, not tape-recorded but reconstructed afterwards. Presumably, this dubious method is used in order to facilitate 'natural' conversation. The effect on the reader, however, can be quite the opposite to Seabrook's intention. This is particularly noticeable in the later books, such as *The Leisure Society* (1988), where Seabrook's linking passages of commentary are fuller. Sometimes his interlocutors come across like ventriloquist dummies. None the less, these ordinary voices also frequently suggest striking insights.

There is running right through Seabrook's work a 'tragic vision', as Huw Beynon (1982) puts it: the fall from a pre-welfare-state dignity of labour to the compulsive and illusorily egalitarian mass consumption fostered by late capitalism. The title of one of Seabrook's best-known books is the tormenting question, *What Went Wrong?* (1978). The political hopes of a socially emancipated

working class were, in his estimation, dashed on the rocks of a merely ostensible economic emancipation. And, when mass unemployment returned with a vengeance in the early 1980s, shattering the normative expectations cultivated by post-Second World War social democracy, the casualties were abandoned with no resources of resistance, hoist on the petard of short-lived affluence:

Because the draining away of much of the strength of the working class has taken place under a huckster's cry of gifts, rewards, offers and prizes, it is harder to perceive than that other, older poverty. Its very intangibility makes it difficult to reduce to words. But it is no less real; it is a feeling, gnawing, corrosive, inescapable. It is not by chance that everything in Western culture is so readily turned into the visible, the palpable, image and commodity, what Guy Debord describes as the 'society of the spectacle'. Everything that exists becomes pictures, objects that can be seen and handled and which give an impression of multifarious richness and diversity. This is perhaps a metaphor for the way in which all the plundered attributes of working-class collectivism have been transformed. The anguish, the pain and loneliness which have been inflicted in exchange for all those positive intangibles are, like them, not acknowledged; and they remain buried beneath the torrent of visual stimuli, the manufactured excitement of buying and selling.

(Seabrook 1982: 38)

Seabrook's writings are replete with such synoptic statements concerning the moral corruption of the working class and the worthlessness of mass culture:

It is not so much that capitalism has delivered the goods to the people, as that the people have been increasingly delivered to the goods.

(1988: 183)

One of the great paradoxes is that the exaltation of the individual must seek its fulfilment through what are essentially mass markets: people whose individuality is actually impaired by the fact that they read the same newspapers, see the same television programmes, eat the same foods, dress in the same fashions, worship the same shadowy creatures promoted by

show business We should not be afraid to speak of the decay of a culture which is dominated by an ideology that teaches that life is something out of which it is the individual's highest duty to get as much money, sex and fun as he or she may; the dehumanizing of people in what is mistakenly called 'popular culture' (for it belongs to capitalism) in its 'entertainment' industry, with its cult of violence and pornography and degradation of human relationships.

(1990: 38, 166)

The recurrent themes of the mass culture critique are evident enough in Seabrook's despairing words. My main reason for quoting him at length is to illustrate the combination of radical pessimism with the search for a popular agency to reverse the process. Zygmunt Bauman (1987) argues that modern intellectuals in their now apparently *passé* wish to legislate rather than merely interpret have typically sought, at least until very recently, an agent for their project. For much of the twentieth century the leading candidate was the proletariat: but, with 'the emancipation of capital from labour' (the technological replacement of labour and the formation of a dual labour market divided into a minority of privileged workers and a disposable majority of peripheral and service workers), that particular agent of guaranteed historical transformation has disappeared (Gorz 1982 and 1985). Not even Seabrook and Blackwell, who have consistently spoken out on behalf of the poor, believe that an immiserated underclass can realise the socialist project. Now they argue that 'the myth of socialism', which promised so much and failed in its own terms, is subordinate to 'the green myth'. Capitalism and its erstwhile mimic, communism, despoils the Earth in its endless drive for productive growth and expanded consumption. The ecological *and* cultural costs are too great for us all:

The green myth has the undoubted advantage of appearing to be true [It is] deeply radicalizing, vibrant with emancipatory promise At the individual level, what myths and religions primarily offer is a vision of unity, a sense of wholeness, a feeling of reconciliation between the individual and the universe, between the one and the many.

(Blackwell and Seabrook 1988: 97, 98, 101)

All our differences (individual, class, gender, sexual, racial, ethnic

and so on) can thus be subsumed, according to this quasi-mystical inflection of the mass-culture critique. Our shared natural and survival interests make us 'one people', which must be the ultimate populist promise. That such a conception of 'the people' seems of necessity to be displaced temporally from the present either into a lost past or into a Utopian future undermines its contemporary appeal, except as a persistently critical reminder that life could be better.

A more narrowly cultural but equally radical strand of this populism against mass-culture trajectory is the movement for 'cultural democracy'. During the 1960s, educational and cultural policy spending expanded in order to open up social 'access'. However, the idea of 'access' was a two-edged sword. What did 'access' mean in the cultural field? Access to established forms of art and knowledge or the means of production to redefine art and knowledge in the interests of hitherto excluded groups? The Arts Council meant the first, but it could hardly ignore the second meaning, articulated most energetically by community artists and political dramatists in the 1970s. They entered the margins of state funding while simultaneously denouncing the state and all its works, a somewhat contradictory position (Kelly 1984). John McGrath of the 7.84 Theatre Company, for instance, wanted a popular working-class theatre not only to oppose the theatrical culture of the National Theatre but to support counter-hegemonic struggles against the dominant institutions of capitalist society as a whole (McGrath: 1981). As money tightened in the late 1970s, the social democrats presiding over the Arts Council were seeking a way out. Su Braden's book of 1978, *Artists and People*, presented them with a heaven-sent opportunity:

Before we can talk about 'community arts' or 'artists in residence', it must be understood that the so-called *cultural heritage* which made Europe great . . . is no longer communicating anything to the vast majority of Europe's population . . . It is not that these cultural forms are 'above people's heads' but that it is a *bourgeois* culture and therefore only immediately meaningful to that group. The great artistic deception of the twentieth century has been to insist to all people that this was *their* culture. The Arts Council of Great Britain was established on this premise.

(1978: 153)

The Secretary General of the Arts Council, Roy Shaw, attacked Braden's 'vulgar Marxism' in a *Guardian* review (20 September 1978); and the Vice-chairman of the Council, none other than Richard Hoggart, weighed into the debate as well. Hoggart (1979) defended the Arts Council's prioritising of expenditure on 'the main performing arts in particular (drama, music, opera, ballet)', in order to keep seat prices down at venues such as the Royal Opera House in Covent Garden, instead of wasting limited revenue upon what he dubbed disparagingly as 'participant, grass-roots, democratic and popular arts' (p. 238). At the 1980 symposium on 'Excellence and Standards in the Arts', Hoggart (1980) criticised cultural relativists, citing Braden in particular, and also the 'cultural slumming' of some academics (I wonder whom he was thinking of?). He went on to say, 'in both educational and arts writing over the last ten years, left-wing writers have got away with murder' (p. 30).

Hoggart's apparent inconsistencies distanced him from the cultural democratic movement with its various inflections of class, gender and race, a much more whole-hearted populism than he ever evinced. Braden's arguments for community photography can be taken as exemplary of oppositional cultural democracy and its uncompromising case against 'the dominant culture' of both 'art' and 'mass media':

as a purveyor of dominant cultural bias, photography is capable of forming the vanguard of any invasion: an invasion where the incursionists take with them the ideologies, conventions and often the context from their own world as they launch themselves on the world of others. Alongside popular music and television, photography is the modern tool through which the dominant culture transmits its philosophies.

(1983: 1)

Here Braden is referring to documentary photography's depiction of the oppressed from the viewpoint of the oppressor culture, an often-cited example of which is the sentimentally liberal work of Donald McCullen. As Barthes (1961) pointed out, photography is particularly seductive since it functions as 'a message without a code' (p. 17), by which he means that photography's iconic significations look like unmediated transcriptions of reality. This 'reality effect' of the photograph (and other textual forms) is routinely 'deconstructed' in communication, cultural and media

studies. It is one thing, however, to reveal the absent codes of photography but quite another to produce 'different' photographic images. Braden proceeds:

The alternative to cultural invasion is the altogether more conscious, more painstaking one, described by the educationalist Paulo Freire as 'cultural synthesis', in which the incursionists become collaborators, integrated with the people and acting with them in collective authorship.

(1983: 1)

According to Braden, oppositional cultural workers should find ways of collaborating with the oppressed in their self-representation.

This relates, by a circuitous route, to Williams's concern about the loss of a popular educational project in cultural studies, discussed in the last chapter. For instance, Andrew Dewdney and Martin Lister sought, with limited success, to apply contemporary cultural studies to photographic education at the Inner London Education Authority's Cockpit Arts Workshop during the 1980s:

the underlying creative project of our generation was set by this felt need for a clearer understanding and more relevant forms of cultural practice. What we see now is that over fifteen years the first part of that generational project has been expressed by the development of courses and centres which do pay critical attention to how historical changes and shifts inform the framework of expression and communication. The courses we have in mind are those where social, economic and historical forces are made central to the perceptions and analysis of cultural forms. It is a pity, although to be expected, that these developments have been almost wholly confined to degree courses in higher education, rather than in the formation of newer kinds of popular cultural and educational institutions.

(Dewdney and Lister 1986: 6)

Dewdney and Lister stress the empowerment of practical photography for young people, not only as a technical practice but as a critical sense-making activity. The schism between such developments in media education, more widespread in fact than Dewdney and Lister imply in the quoted passage, and the mainstream trajectory of cultural studies raises complex and difficult questions. Time and again it has been found that cultural

production interests school students and community groups more than the study of consumption, the direction in which theoretical cultural studies has gone. Community arts, in contrast, have explored the possibilities of alternative and oppositional production. The radical populist intent of such practices came under attack from the Right during the 1980s, not surprisingly. It also, not so predictably, came under attack from the Left. Geoff Mulgan and Ken Worpole (1986), arguing the late-GLC case 'for a shift away from the traditional, patronage-based models of funding towards new forms of investment and regulation' (p. 10), challenged the 'indifference to possible audiences' (p. 87) of many community arts projects. Just 'doing it' very often seemed to be enough: little attention was paid to audience-formation and marketing (Lewis *et al.* 1986). A new spirit was in the air which insisted that the 'enterprise culture' could no longer be simply opposed in circumstances where state funding was being reduced or withdrawn. A good illustration of what was at stake for populist cultural politics is the fate of the 7.84 Theatre Companies in England and Scotland.

The story of how 7.84 (England) lost its Arts Council grant and its subsequent failure to benefit from GLC and Labour Movement patronage is told in John McGrath's 1990 book, *The Bone Won't Break*. McGrath also tells of how he left 7.84 (Scotland) because he could not agree with the new commercial 'realism' of publicly subsidised art. Clearly, these experiences were personally painful since McGrath had turned away from the lucrative terrains of television and film writing in the early 1970s to found 7.84 as a popular-democratic alternative at a moment of radical optimism. My purpose here in discussing some of McGrath's ideas is not to explain what happened to the political theatre movement and 7.84 in particular during the changing conditions of the 1980s: rather, it is to register what was at one time a compelling instance of populism against mass culture.

McGrath defines popular culture, first, in opposition to official 'serious' culture, 'the culture of working people in their areas' contrasted with the allegedly national 'dominant high culture which the middle and upper classes are mainly qualified to consume' (1990: 57). On the politics of public arts funding, this is close to the nub of the matter. However, McGrath's notion of 'the popular' is on a broader basis defined as the source and practice of resistance to 'mass culture'. He talks of mass production and

standardisation in industrial societies in a manner not markedly different from the Leavisites and mass-culture critics in general: '[t]he real problem . . . involves the character of modern industrial society, and the nature and control of the mass media' (p. 60). Leisure-time privatisation, the role of television, the motor car and package holidays are all treated negatively by McGrath and he complains about the reduction of 'occasions for social exchange' taking place in the contexts of face-to-face interaction. This relates to the value of 'presence' in theatre compared with the technological impersonality of mass media. McGrath himself would probably argue that there is nothing inherently alienating about television as such, that the problem lies in who owns, controls and dictates the programming in capitalist society. None the less, he does view 'the effects of mass-production on the standardisation of popular culture' (p. 61) with a grim negativity. McGrath goes on to say:

So the implication is that live, communally-generated and experienced popular culture rooted in the traditions of long-established communities is on the decline, and being replaced by the consumption in small groups of a standardised, non-local, non-specific culture created by those very groups of people who wish to exploit the backward elements in popular culture for their own commercial or political ends, the people who oppose any struggle for popular culture as interfering with nature.

(1990: 62)

Speaking as a cultural producer, McGrath recognises opportunities for exploiting contradictions in the dominant system (for example, radical television programmes), but he believes these opportunities have become fewer and further between due to the increasingly market-regulated environment of transnational cultural production and distribution. And, as McGrath insists, the social democratic dissemination of high culture to the masses is no alternative. Thus, he kept faith with the original project of 7.84, to collaborate with local popular cultures, the best example of which was the Scottish ceilidh play, *The Cheviot, the Stag and the Black, Black Oil*, performed both in community centres and on television in the early 1970s (see McArthur 1978). It is significant, however, that such a practice should have been most successful in relatively unindustrialised rural settings –

settings like the Highlands of Scotland, internationally emblematic in terms of the relationship to the oil industry. It is on the peripheries of the industrial world where this variant of populist cultural politics makes the most obvious sense, reminding us of 'the discovery of popular culture' historically during the transition from 'tradition' to 'modernity'. Similar to that of Seabrook and Blackwell, McGrath tends to envisage the future in the imagery and poetry of the past,⁹ but the main weakness is not wherefrom the poetry is drawn but its limited grasp on the dynamics of contemporary cultural consumption. Populism against mass culture is framed by a production-end model of consumption, not unlike the distinctly anti-populist critical theory of Adorno and Horkheimer. To assume that production determines consumption may be a classically Marxist assumption, yet even Karl Marx (1973) emphasised the dialectic of production and consumption: 'Without production, no consumption; but also, without consumption, no production; since production would then be purposeless' (p. 91).

Mike Featherstone (1990a) identifies two main alternatives to a productionist perspective on consumption in the sociology of culture, both of which were considered briefly in the last chapter: the mode of consumption perspective, exemplified by Pierre Bourdieu's work on distinction and taste; and the study of pleasure, of which Mikhail Bakhtin's work on carnival is one source (incidentally, also an influence on McGrath's recent thinking). These perspectives frame but do not exhaust the analytical positions taken on cultural consumption. The next section traces the emergence of an exclusively consumptionist approach to popular culture out of a once dominant hegemony theory, which is ironic when one considers Tony Bennett's (1986a) mandarin dismissal of populism against mass culture in the context of extolling the virtues of hegemony theory: 'left-wing populism, in its unqualified forms is, fortunately, no longer a flourishing species' (p. 17).

FROM HEGEMONY THEORY TO THE NEW REVISIONISM

'Booms' in academic stocks and shares come and go (Morris 1988). The market for popular cultural critique slumped badly during the 1980s after an initial high. At the beginning of the decade, hegemony theory soared; but, by the end of the decade,

everybody seemed to be buying into the new revisionism. This rise and fall in values represents the second major trajectory of cultural populism considered here.

Hegemony theory framed the Open University's hugely influential distance-learning course 'U203 Popular Culture', which ran from 1982 to 1987. The OU is renowned for curriculum innovation in higher education due to the wide dissemination of its teaching materials, and this course was no exception. Following the lead set at Birmingham by Stuart Hall, who had recently become Professor of Sociology at the OU, Tony Bennett and some of his colleagues on the Popular Culture course team wanted to weld together the disparate strands of cultural studies with 'the turn to Gramsci' (Introduction to Bennett *et al.* 1986); and, to draw lessons for cultural politics from it.⁴ In order to reconstitute the study of popular culture, Hall's division between culturalist voluntarism and structuralist determinism had to be overcome. In the 1970s, this paradigmatic divide had been marked out broadly by the tension between the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) and the Society for Education in Film and Television (SEFT).

SEFT and its internationally acclaimed journal, *Screen*, was the most important alternative site to Birmingham's CCCS for theorising popular culture. If CCCS tended to veer towards 'culturalism', SEFT was unremittingly 'structuralist', or rather, combining structural linguistics with Althusserian Marxism and Lacanian psychoanalysis, 'poststructuralist' (Coward and Ellis 1977). This French-inspired school differed sharply from the principal orientations of indigenous cultural studies, which had opened up to continental theory but not with the same exclusivity. The heady theoretical brew concerning 'textuality' and 'subject positioning', published by *Screen*, gave it a distinctly elite caste compared with the plebeian sympathies of CCCS. *Screen* theory took for granted that bourgeois and patriarchal ideologies thoroughly infused mainstream media, disturbed occasionally by 'trouble' in Hollywood texts and subverted by *avant-garde* film practices, but leaving virtually no conceptual space for the audience as a social rather than textual construct. Louis Althusser's theory of ideology supplied philosophical weight to this textual determinism. According to Althusser (1970), 'ideology in general' reconciled subjects to their conditions of existence and 'ideological state apparatuses', including communications and

cultural institutions, pumped them full of 'nationalism, chauvinism, liberalism, moralism, etc.' (p. 28), thereby securing the reproduction of capitalist social relations. The ideological model was extended to cover the systematic reproduction of patriarchal relations as well, signalling an eventual shift from structuralist Marxism to feminist psychoanalysis. Textual discourses of cinematic realism, identification and scopophilia were endlessly unravelled in the early work of *Screen* theorists such as Colin MacCabe (1974) and Laura Mulvey (1975), somehow protected by 'theory' from the effects of dominant ideologies. Although complex, subtle and revisable, their original message was also functionalist, predictable and insistently unpopular.⁵

In cultural studies, around the inception of the OU's Popular Culture course, we find the distinctly anti-realist chronology whereby the ideas of a contemporary theorist, Louis Althusser, still writing in the 1970s, are superseded by those of an Italian politician, Antonio Gramsci, who died in 1937. Gramsci's legacy, for cultural studies, was a set of enigmatic notes from his final eleven years of life spent languishing in Mussolini's prisons (Hoare and Nowell-Smith 1971). These notes, written in code to evade the fascist prison censors, are open to multiple interpretation. None the less, they offered a way of theorising culture and power in advanced capitalist societies more nuanced than the dominant ideology thesis, whether in the demotic version of cultural democracy, echoing the mass culture critique, or in the theoretical machinery of Althusserianism and its progeny.

The editors of the extracts from Gramsci's prison notebooks in the Open University reader, *Culture, Ideology and Social Process* (Bennett *et al.* 1981a) focus on the centrality of 'hegemony' in the Italian revolutionary's writings. The concept of hegemony refers to how the dominant class bloc in society constructs and sustains its leadership over subordinate groupings. The crucial point is that hegemony does not rely most effectively on coercion (although that is always a possibility) but instead on a complex process of winning consent to the prevailing order. As Raymond Williams (1973) put it, hegemony 'saturates society', legitimated by intellectual strata but flowing through ordinary practices and meanings in common sense reasoning and everyday representations, working as a kind of social 'cement'. However, it never sets solid: hegemonic leadership is never accomplished once and for all. There is a constant battle in which the ruling bloc has

to struggle for leadership against various resistances and oppositions. Sometimes the ruling bloc makes concessions to subordinate forces and, at other times, hard-won rights and opportunities are withdrawn. The particular hegemonic configuration at any one time depends on economic conditions and the current balance of power between contending forces. Hegemony is, then, endless struggle.

Gramsci himself actually made what amounted to a programmatic statement for cultural studies: 'It would be interesting to study concretely the forms of cultural organisation which keep the ideological world in movement within a given country, and to examine how they function in practice' (quoted by Bennett *et al.* 1981a: 195-6). And he goes on to say: 'The methodological criteria on which our own study must be based is the following: that the supremacy of a social group manifests itself in two ways, as 'domination' and as 'intellectual and moral leadership' (Bennett *et al.* 1981a: 197). So, according to Gramsci, cultural analysis should be situated within the problematic of hegemony, a piece of advice taken to heart and circulated with great aplomb by Stuart Hall (1980a).

Gramsci's purpose in recommending such study was not academic. His thinking was forged out of the specific historical circumstances in which Italian fascism had defeated socialism and communism. He wanted to understand what had happened and to rebuild an oppositional politics. The concept of 'the national-popular' is of paramount importance in this respect. Gramsci complained bitterly that in Italy, '[t]he lay forces have failed in their historical task as educators and elaborators of the intellectual and moral awareness of the people-nation' (in Forgacs and Nowell-Smith 1985: 211). The Roman Catholic church, the split between northern industrialism and southern agrarianism needed to be taken into account by a progressive and modernising political project. Gramsci believed the failure to organise a broad oppositional alliance had enabled the fascists to seize power. Parallels with the era of Thatcherism in Britain seemed, to some, clear and unmistakable. The 'universal class' was anything but standing in line ready for a frontal assault on the state, yet the women's movement, blacks, gays, CND and a multitude of community and single issue campaigns suggested that all was not lost. According to David Forgacs (1984), '[i]t is these two things arrayed against one another - the new state formation and the

heterogeneous oppositional forces - which produce the need for a concept like the national-popular' (p. 84).

In a more strictly academic context, while the OU course was under preparation, Tony Bennett (1980) declared, 'the concept of popular culture is virtually useless, a melting pot of confused and contradictory meanings capable of misdirecting enquiry up any number of theoretical blind alleys' (p. 18). He then set about reviewing the extant usages of the concept, four in all: first, 'well-liked by many people'; second, 'a residual category consisting of those forms that are "left over" once the sphere of high culture has been defined'; third, 'a synonym for "mass culture"'; fourth, 'forms of cultural practice that are firmly rooted in the creative impulses of "the people" or particular sections of the people'. The first two usages are easily enough discarded. 'Well-liked by many people' is merely a quantitative observation, not a concept; and, besides, forms which would not usually be considered popular have large numbers of admirers, such as grand opera. Where do you draw the line? The second usage is more promising in this respect: that which remains once the line has been drawn for 'high culture'. However, such a solution is static and unhistorical since the most elementary knowledge of cultural history indicates that forms cross the line: for example, Shakespearian theatre started out as 'popular'. Historically shifting definitions and distinctions are woven into Bennett's eventual synthesis of the third and fourth usages. The third usage, 'popular culture' as a synonym for 'mass culture', is represented by the political variations of the mass culture critique, running from conservative and liberal elitism to the Frankfurt School. The trouble is it only sees popular culture as imposed by commercial interests on a gullible and dopey mass: that won't do for the populist sentiments of neo-Gramscian hegemony theory. The fourth usage is the romantic popular culture perspective from below,⁶ of which radical populism against mass culture is an instance. Bennett recognised it as the main contender hitherto for a serious political engagement on the terrain of popular culture. The problem with this position, however, is that it conceives of commercial 'mass culture' as wholly meretricious and, most erroneously, it has an essentialist conception of 'the people' as a fixed entity forever waiting in the wings for their call on to the stage of history, already fully formed and authentic.

Bennett's solution was to keep 'popular culture' definitionally open, not as an inventory of forms or essential meanings but as a

field of continually changing relations between the 'imposed from above' and the 'emerging from below': in effect, to historicise the concept as a site of perpetual struggle, negotiation and transaction, inspired by Gramsci, mediated by Hall. As he says:

To rethink the concept of popular culture in and through the concept of hegemony is thus to define it as a system of relations – between classes – which constitutes one of the primary sites upon which the ideological struggle for the production of class alliances or the production of consent, active or passive, is conducted.

(Bennett 1980: 26)

This rethinking of popular culture spawned a proliferation of research and pedagogy in either direct or indirect relation to the OU course, situating text/context analyses within critical and historical frameworks. Yet, although it offered a means of cohering the hitherto boundless field of cultural studies, the dialectical synthesis of neo-Gramscian hegemony theory was, nevertheless, an unstable project for several reasons. It demanded at least some residual attachment to historical materialism, underpinned by a theory of class relations, however non-reductionist. Radical feminists and some socialist feminists would not accept such an implicit privileging of capitalism over patriarchy as the determinate structure of social relations (see Segal 1987). Furthermore, the national-popular concept, appropriated by Hall and others in relation to Britain, is in danger of suppressing the specific dynamics of black and ethnic struggles, as Paul Gilroy (1987) argued forcefully (in fact, the Popular Culture course paid hardly any attention to race). Moreover, hegemony theory's break with the dominant ideology thesis may be considered less than complete:

the truth conditions for this version of the theory of hegemony are very similar to Adorno's theory of mass popular culture. For Adorno, popular culture is ideological and furthermore articulates a dominant ideology. For the Gramscians, popular culture typically takes a hegemonic form to which other cultures are subordinated, while being a site of struggle. For both positions, popular culture has ideological force and both have to submit to similar tests of that force. The disagreement is only about *how* that force is achieved.

(Abercrombie 1990: 202)

For neo-Gramscian hegemony theory, this methodological cut may not be quite so fatal as it first appears since there is perhaps a certain incommensurability between the sociological critique of 'the dominant ideology thesis' and interdisciplinary study of popular culture.

Nicholas Abercrombie and his co-authors (1980) made out a compelling case and modified their position in response to popular cultural studies (1990), but their wish to show that capitalism is sustained by 'the dull compulsion of economic relations' (Marx quoted by Hill 1990: 3), not by ideological domination, set itself a larger problem than did the OU course. Bennett and his closest collaborators were less concerned with explaining how capitalism is sustained than with tracking particular forms of hegemony through British history:

we would argue that it is misleading to construe hegemony solely as a *condition* and, correspondingly, to view the task of historical interpretation as being to ascertain its presence or absence in any period. The concept refers rather to an always active and continuing *process*, the struggle between contending social forces for cultural and political leadership. Instead of asking whether hegemony exists or not, we would try to identify the *particular forms* this struggle took at a particular moment, the conditions bearing upon that struggle, and so on.

(Bennett and Donald 1981: 79–80)

This is a protocol for historical research, inspired by the Birmingham Centre's distinction between 'expansive hegemony' and 'hegemonic crisis' (Hall *et al.* 1978). At moments of expansive hegemony there is a powerful ideological principle of articulation ('affluence', 'law 'n' order', 'popular capitalism', 'classless society' and so on), whereas moments of crisis occur when a new articulation is required, which may result in a fundamental transformation of the structure or not, as the case may be.

If there are problems with distinguishing hegemony theory from the dominant ideology thesis, the problems of reconciling it with a theory of pleasure are potentially insurmountable. Taking popular culture seriously involves, as Colin Mercer (1986) observed, taking pleasure seriously. However, Marxism has never been too strong on the question of pleasure, with the notable exceptions of Brecht and Bakhtin. Mercer made a strenuous attempt to address the question of pleasure from a neo-Gramscian

standpoint: accounting for 'active consent'. Pleasure, albeit ideologically implicated, however, exceeds the problematic of hegemony. Of necessity, Mercer had to consider other problematics, most notably Lacanian psychoanalysis (see Turkle 1979) and Michel Foucault's attention to the body as the site of power, body politics instead of the body politic (see Foucault 1977 and 1979). Fantasy, the unconscious, the split subject (Lacan), disciplinary discourses of the body (Foucault) and hedonism (the later Barthes of *plaisir* and *jouissance* 1975) are all relevant to opening up the question of pleasure but none of them quite resolves the question of hegemony. Mercer opted for a Foucauldian emphasis on the micro-politics of the body:

Photography, film, detective fiction can be taken as key instances in the contemporary cartography of pleasure. They, amongst others, constitute a plurality of powers and potentials, a technology of the body and of the social which makes up – elaborates – a dense texture of complicities, of subjectivities, which are formed not just 'in the head' but across the space of the body too.

(1986: 66)

The synthesis of Gramscian state politics and Foucauldian body politics is a promising one. Already, Edward Said had combined Gramsci, Foucault and Williams convincingly in his study *Orientalism* (1978). More difficult to reconcile are psychoanalytic and sociological explanations of pleasure, as Terry Lovell argued from a perspective close to hegemony theory:

Any Marxist theory of consumption would have as its central category 'use-value', and would focus on 'the pleasure of the text'. It is true that Althusserian and Lacanian currents in cultural studies have turned to this important question of pleasure, but its meaning has been restricted to the narrow Freudian sense. Cultural products are articulated structures of feeling and sensibility which derive from collective, shared experience as well as from individual desires and pleasures. The pleasure of the text stems at least in part from collective utopias, social wish fulfilment and social aspirations, and these are not simply the sublimated expression of more basic sexual desires.

(1980: 61)

Although psychoanalysis has much to say about the specifically

psychic and erotic mechanisms of pleasure, this social conception increasingly guided cultural populist thinking in the 1980s. It not only went beyond the psychologistic limitations of Freudian theory; it also called into question Marxist theories of commodity fetishism, the subsumption of use value by exchange value, and the alienation of 'real needs' by 'false' ones. The capitalist mode of production and market forces, according to Lovell, do not legislate for the social use or meaning of cultural commodities, whether primarily functional (such as clothes) or primarily symbolic (for example, television programmes). There is space, then, for active consumption and production of meaning: a space which has since been explored in terms of both the modes and pleasures of consumerism.

That is the kind of position given a Foucauldian gloss in the following passage from Mica Nava's article, 'Consumerism and its contradictions':

consumerism can be argued to exercise control through the incitement and proliferation of increasingly detailed and comprehensive discourses. Yet because of the diffuse nature of this control, because it operates from such a multiplicity of points and is not unitary, it is also vulnerable. If this is the case, then contemporary preoccupations with imagery and the buying of things can be understood not only as part of this new technology of power, but as, variably (sometimes simultaneously), both as a form of subjection to it and a form of resistance. They are not inherently one thing or the other, since, if consuming objects and images is potentially subversive, this potential is countered always by its potential reappropriation and transformation into yet another mode of regulation.

(1987: 207)

Nava's slippery rubric, reminiscent of Bennett's definitionally open popular culture, is proposed as a 'more nuanced understanding of subjectivity' and is orientated to women's power in consumption. She deliberately counterposes this sphere to the boys' sphere of economics and production. Always to return questions of consumption to production is both conceptually impoverished and also, from Nava's feminist variant of cultural populism, patriarchal theorising. However, the consumerist departure from hegemony theory's dialectical balancing act is not

peculiarly feminist since, as Nava observes, such a rubric is 'a form of permission entitling members of today's left intelligentsia to enjoy consuming images and commodities' (p. 209). In that remark one can detect an enormous sigh of relief at being let off the hook of 'puritanical' critique *per se*: the cultural analyst now allowed to enjoy herself (and himself) instead of constantly having to expose the dire workings of 'the system' and its dreadful ideologies. Here we begin to see the drift into an uncritical populism, of which I shall take John Fiske's work on television and popular culture as a revealing instance.⁷

Fiske's agenda, it should be noted, borrows some items from feminist cultural studies, including rejection of the simplistic binary of positive/negative imagery and the exploration of feminine empowerment in media and consumer culture, but it carries the revisionist logic of those emphases to an outer limit that, I believe, few feminists would wholly agree with. The much-debated case of Madonna is indicative. When she burst upon the scene in 1985, several British feminists sought to make sense of Madonna. Diana Simmonds disputed the authenticity of her earthy image (*Marxism Today*, October 1985), whereas Judith Williamson stressed the irony of Madonna's self-presentation and her sly complicity with ordinary women's feelings: 'It is this flaunting of her fame that ties Madonna so firmly to other women and girls' (*New Socialist*, October 1985). And Cheryl Garratt observed, 'men are terrified of Madonna, which is part of the reason why other women love her so' (*Women's Review*, March 1986).⁸ It is interesting, then, that Fiske chose Madonna's videos and her youthful female fans to demonstrate the respective merits of 'Screen theory' and 'cultural ethnography' in his summary of British cultural studies approaches to television (1987a). 'Screen theory' here stands for structuralist, linguistically based textual analysis of how texts position subjects; and 'cultural ethnography' stands for the interpretation of ordinary people's experiential accounts and pleasures. Fiske analysed the punning strategies of Madonna's early videos like *Material Girl*, and he interviewed young girls about what they thought of Madonna, her actual meaning for them. He says: 'Cultural analysis reaches a satisfactory conclusion when the ethnographic studies of the historically and socially located meanings that are made are related to the semiotic analysis of the text' (1987a: 272). A pleasing symmetry indeed: meaning is conceived of as a transaction between semiotic

structures and interpretative subjects, but, in spite of Fiske's reference to 'historically and socially located meanings', comparatively decontextualised, at least in terms of the dialectic of cultural production and consumption, and isolated from time-space co-ordinates. Fiske's often quite acute analyses are largely confined to the hermetic encounter between the consumer and the commodity, the reader and the text, qualified only by a broad definition of 'text' and a free-floating 'intertextuality' borrowed from poststructuralism.

Significantly, in a book-length study of television (1987b), Fiske says next to nothing about institutional change in television during the 1980s: vital issues to do with de-regulation/re-regulation and technology, for instance, are simply banished since, for Fiske, they are not pertinent to questions of interpretation. That there is no discussion of the policy clash between public service and free market principles over the organisation of broadcasting, especially in the British context from which Fiske and his approach originally hail, is a sad omission in the work of a theorist claiming to provide a critical understanding of television.

Thus, following Bourdieu, Fiske separates 'the cultural economy' (symbolic exchange between texts and audiences) from 'the financial economy' (where the television industry is located). Fiske believes it is completely unnecessary to interpret the meaning of the former in relation to the commercial operations of the latter: 'In this book I have argued against the common belief that the capitalist cultural industries produce only an apparent variety of products whose variety is finally illusory for they all promote the same capitalist ideology' (1987b: 309). This is a routine objection to the mass culture critique and the alleged cultural homogenisation and ideological closure said, by some radical critics, to result automatically from capitalist media production and distribution. Fiske, alternatively, stresses the variety and openness of mainstream television texts, enhanced rather than diminished by commercially populist imperatives (for instance, he makes a great deal of *Dallas*'s appropriation by people of widely divergent cultures during the 1980s).

A satisfactory theory of television, I would suggest, needs to account for the multi-dimensional interaction of production and consumption at both economic and symbolic levels, giving due weight to textual diversity and audience differences, as Fiske

rightly recommends. Yet, in practice, Fiske merely produces a simple inversion of the mass culture critique at its worst, thereby reducing television study to a kind of subjective idealism, focused more or less exclusively on 'popular readings', which are applauded with no evident reservations at all, never countenancing the possibility that a popular reading could be anything other than 'progressive'. Fiske's television viewers, unlike Madonna, do not live in the material world or, for that matter, in a world where sexism, racism and xenophobia circulate amongst ordinary people.

Fiske's two-volume book on popular culture (1989a and 1989b), makes the rationale for bracketing off history, macro-politics and economics even more explicit. He recruits several not entirely compatible theoretical authorities to support his views (Bakhtin, Barthes, Bourdieu, De Certeau, Foucault, Gramsci, Hall, to mention a few). They are raided and sanitised in order to help him beat the drum against those whom he argues cannot see the micro-politics of popular culture in consuming practices and reading pleasures because they are so hopelessly fixated on macro-politics and the machinations of the cultural industries. Which is not to say that Fiske himself has any illusions about where the products actually come from. In various selections and combinations throughout *Understanding Popular Culture* (1989a) and *Reading the Popular* (1989b) the ultimate provider is named: 'white patriarchal bourgeois capitalism'. This empty rhetorical hybrid, however, has no real analytical function to perform because, in Fiske's scheme of things, 'the people' are not at all ground down or denied by the reified monster that supplies the goods. In effect, there is a striking homology between Fiske's 'semiotic democracy' and the ideal of 'consumer sovereignty' in free market economics, in spite of his extreme aversion to economic reasoning. Repressed materials will always return, if only in symptoms open to differential decoding.

Under modern conditions, according to Fiske, there is no way in which the material artefacts of popular culture can be made by 'the people': that folkish practice is a thing of the past. But, contemporary popular culture is indeed 'produced' by 'the people', metaphorically speaking, in the transaction between the dominant culture's products and their consumption by subordinate groups: working-class, female, black and so on. Apparently, 'popular readings' of commodity texts are by virtue of

social subordination never complicit with any kind of domination: '[t]here can be no popular dominant culture, for popular culture is formed always in reaction to, and never as part of, the forces of domination' (1989a: 43). Ordinary people persistently 'evade' and 'resist' the oppressive and make their own personally liberating meanings through consumption. Hence, shopping malls, video arcades, the beach, TV game shows, jeans and many other products of 'white patriarchal bourgeois capitalism' become sites and artefacts for pleasures that are 'progressive' though not of course 'radical'. Mass culture critics of Right and Left were wrong to assume that such forms are in any way pacifying. Fiske insists that the opposite view is mistaken too, in effect undermining his own position: unqualified celebration of popular culture is blind to the power relations, the dialectic of domination and subordination. That insight is what distinguishes the radical theorist like Fiske from the mere populist, according to him. There are plenty of examples in Fiske's work, however, to suggest the contrary. Drawing especially on Michel De Certeau's *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984), Fiske's ordinary human being is a tricky customer, negotiating and manoeuvring the best out of any conceivable situation. For example, Fiske tells us admiringly that '[t]he young are shopping mall guerrillas par excellence' (1989a: 37). Unemployed youth's 'trickery' (changing price tags on clothing, and so forth) and 'tactics' (such as trying on a jacket and walking off in it) are compared with the survival tactics used by the Vietcong against the US Army in the 1960s, a comparison of astonishing insouciance that does justice neither to the perils of guerrilla warfare in a swamp nor to petty theft in a shop.

Fiske's conception of popular culture, with its ostensibly critical pedigree, represents a drastic narrowing of vision: the gap between 'popular' and 'mass' culture is finally closed with no residual tension; the relation between interpretative cultural studies and the political economy of culture is obliterated from the surface of the argument. The critical purview of cultural analysis is effectively reduced to a pinpoint seen through the wrong end of a telescope. Fiske's outer limit position represents a kind of neo-Benthamite radicalism, combining utilitarian pleasure-seeking implicitly, and in fact quite consistently, with *laissez-faire* economics, but does not, curiously enough, include Foucault's (1977) paranoid obsession with the panopticon, the political technology of surveillance actually invented by Jeremy Bentham in the early nineteenth

century. Fiske backs popular cultural study into a narrow corner of the field, breaking with any effort to explore the complex circuits of culture, including production as distinct from productive consumption, and the temporal and spatial contexts of culture in a conflictful world.

One can overestimate the importance of Fiske in the study of popular culture. He is essentially a good populariser of difficult ideas and a bowdleriser of their subversive implications, not by any means an original thinker. His work, however, is symptomatic of a general trend: that of 'the new revisionism'. Philip Schlesinger (1991) characterises this as 'a collapse into subjectivism . . . a hermeneutic model of media consumption' that 'forces a breach between politico-economic arguments about the production of culture and the ways in which it is consumed and interpreted' (pp. 148-9). The provenance of the new revisionism, observes Schlesinger, is contemporary cultural studies, which as we have seen was at one time cohered by neo-Gramscian hegemony theory.

James Curran (1990), concentrating on 'mass communication research' rather than 'popular culture' in the broadest sense, has traced in detail the emergence of the new revisionism and suggested that it is not as new as it seems. Reacting against the critical paradigms of both political economy and hegemony theory, several leading students of the media turned towards a much more diffuse concept of power, sometimes inspired by an optimistic reading of Foucault (1977 and 1979), but actually reminiscent of many themes associated with the liberal pluralist paradigm of American mass communication research from the 1940s onwards and promoted in Britain, since the 1960s, by the 'uses and gratifications' school. For Curran, the new revisionism is concerned specifically with *audience* and *cultural value*. In audience research, 'the focus of attention shifted from whether media representations advanced or retarded political and cultural struggle to the question of why the mass media were so popular' (Curran 1990: 146). And '[t]he other notable contribution of revisionist thinking has been to reject the elitist pessimism about mass culture that was a significant strand within the radical tradition, represented by the Frankfurt School' (p. 154).

This is entirely consistent with the view expressed here that the new revisionism is the latest trajectory of British cultural populism: themes of audience empowerment, pleasure and 'popular discrimination', a term used quite constructively by Fiske, are

fundamental to it. My own attitude to this research trajectory is ambivalent. It is genuinely illuminating in the better work of writers like Angela McRobbie and David Morley, but it also involves a retreat from more critical positions. In many ways such a trajectory is understandable, considering how difficult it has become to challenge present conditions with theoretical and political conviction. None the less, there are questions of critique, quality and explanation to be revisited and developed further if we want to avoid abjectly uncritical complicity with prevailing 'free market' ideology and its hidden powers. The exemplary figure in this respect, John Fiske, is frankly self-conscious about overstating the case in his fashionable disdain for anything which is not immediately 'popular'. Concluding a recent essay, Fiske remarks:

The challenge offered by popular culture . . . comes from outside this social, cultural, and academic terrain [of 'high or bourgeois art']: the structure of this essay around the antagonism between dominant and popular culture is intended to emphasize this challenge and to help resist its incorporation. If, as a result, I am charged with oversimplifying the dominant, then this is a price which my academic politics lead me to think is worth paying.

(1991: 115)

It is a curious conception of 'the dominant' in the cultural field that confines it to the official terrain of 'high or bourgeois art' and has no sense of a much more dominant set of market-based arrangements that were not, in the past, treated so favourably by academics. 'High or bourgeois art' has arguably become too easy a target, and perhaps something of a straw man, for a new generation of intellectual populists to attack. Fiske's politics is actually quite a pervasive 'academic politics' and, for this reason, his work should not be simply ignored as a peculiar aberration or considered in isolation from more substantial work, such as that of Paul Willis's (1990a and b) 'common culture' research, which is discussed in the next chapter.

QUESTIONING POPULISM

In this chapter I have traced two trajectories of cultural populism: the first, leading to a *productionist* view of popular culture; the second, leading to a *consumptionist* view. On the cusp of the mass

culture critique, the cultural democracy movement tried and failed to establish a kind of dual power in the cultural field based on a popular system of production opposed to the dominant system. This project fell foul of the rightward turn in Britain from the late 1970s, which reconstructed the conditions of political and cultural hegemony, undermining the public sector and applying free market ideology across the institutional practices of British society. Radical populism had a contradictory love/hate relationship to social democracy but, more seriously, it underestimated popular powers of cultural consumption. The second trajectory, by contrast, was eventually to reach a position which vastly overestimated consumer power, falling into an uncritical populism not entirely different from right-wing political economy.

Between these two extremes, neo-Gramscian hegemony theory aimed to account dialectically for the interplay of the 'imposed from above' and the 'emerging from below'. Within contemporary cultural studies this continues to be a residual position and perhaps, if Angela McRobbie (1991a) is right, the preferred one. However, as I argued at the end of the last chapter, the field of study has fragmented, with leading positions restructuring around the opposition and interactions between postmodernist theory and new revisionist thought and practice (Morris 1988). To some extent, McRobbie is right to argue that hegemony theory offers a means of cohering the field, but it has never done so adequately due to the original schism with the political economy of culture. Although it is possible, and desirable, to have a situation of methodological pluralism, the uncritical drift of popular cultural study is encouraged by the failure to articulate consumption to production. Hegemony theory bracketed off the economics of cultural production in such a way that an exclusively consumptionist perspective could emerge from its internal contradictions: that is one of the reasons why it ceased to be the organising framework it once was.

My doubts concerning this trajectory are not unique. Several other commentators have also questioned the drift into uncritical populism from a number of different perspectives. To conclude this chapter, I shall briefly survey the extant arguments around three themes: *political critique*, *qualitative judgement* and *social scientific explanation*.

In 1987, Paul Willemen, the film theorist, noted

the abdication of critical responsibility in favour of the celebration of existing patterns of consumption based on a principled refusal to countenance the possibility that vast sections of the population have come to derive pleasure from conservative oriented media discourses.

(1990: 105)

He suggested that formerly radical critics were now conniving, in effect, with the intensified commodification of culture by affecting disingenuous solidarity with ordinary people and their preferences. Willemen's tone is harsh and moralistic, but perhaps justifiably so when one considers the knowledge and choices open to the highly educated in comparison with most people (Bourdieu 1984). Approaching the issue from a rather different angle than Willemen, Jostein Gripsrud (1989) argues that an unquestioning endorsement of 'the popular' is downright hypocritical on the part of critics who are themselves well endowed with cultural capital and possess privileged access to both 'high' and 'popular' culture. Their specialised competences are undeniable and should, therefore, be used in the service of an 'emancipatory knowledge interest' (Habermas 1972), not abrogated.

This general line of argument was initiated on the British Left by Judith Williamson's much-debated polemic in the February 1985 issue of *New Socialist*, where she said:

The original context of any product is that of its production. The one feature shared by Hoggart, whose argument is limited to the sphere of leisure and domestic culture, and the post-punk stylists within cultural studies, whose concern is with the meaning of consumerism alone, is an absence of any sense of a relationship between the spheres of production and consumption.

(1985: 19)

Williamson did not deny the power and meaning of 'consuming passion' but she did stress that consumption is unequal; not everyone has the same material access to commodities or an equivalent range of choices: 'The idea that ideologies including consumer fads are increasingly "cut loose" from the economic "base" has become more and more fashionable on the left at a time when these levels have rarely been more obviously connected' (1985: 20). Pre-empting Mica Nava, Williamson pointed out that

sections of the radical intelligentsia were bored with the puritanical zeal of revolutionary politics, and wanted to enjoy themselves and become relevant again. Eighteen months later, Williamson resumed her attack, prompted by recent tributes to Mills and Boon romances, the joys of TV game shows and the subversiveness of (Princess) Sarah Ferguson's public image. She saw all this as symptomatic of a postmodern populism:

One of the big tenets of 'post-modernism' is subjectivity. People are 'allowed' to be subjective 'again', to enjoy, to say what they feel. But the new yuppie-left pop culture craze is peculiarly phoney and non-subjective, for while it centres on *other* people's subjectivity (all those TV watchers who love *The Price is Right* or *Dynasty*) it allows the apparently left-wing practitioners of it to conceal theirs. How about a radical left critique of *The Price is Right*? With all our education, have we nothing more to say than 'people like it'?

(1986a: 19)

Polemical and vulnerable to counter-attack, Williamson none the less posed some of the key questions, mainly concerning the politics of cultural analysis, and she reminded radical intellectuals of a certain critical responsibility. In some quarters she was misconstrued as having reverted to an early Frankfurt School position, most notably by Cora Kaplan (1986a), who replied in the pages of *New Socialist*. Kaplan put the elementary semiological argument that textual meanings change according to reception contexts. For instance, outside its American context of production, *Dallas* was likely to be read ironically, particularly by British viewers, amused by the excessive display of opulence, whereas the meaning of *Dallas* in the United States would be more conservative. Kaplan had a point (audience studies of *Dallas* are discussed in Chapter 4), but as a challenge to Williamson's argument concerning the institutional structures of production/consumption, cultural and material inequality, it rather missed the point. Kaplan's chosen example is significant for another reason: her belief that Williamson was merely re-running the old elitist attack on 'American' popular culture, a favourite theme of the mass culture critique. Kaplan's main example, against Williamson's presumed anti-Americanism, was Steven Spielberg's film version of Alice Walker's novel, *The Color Purple*. In an unguardedly literary moment of textual essentialism, Kaplan

said the film de-radicalised the novel's meaning (namely it was not so 'good'). Despite its faults, however, the film succeeded in communicating a black feminist sensibility hitherto unfamiliar to British audiences (Kaplan 1986b). It is very odd that Kaplan should select a comparatively unusual 'serious' film version of a 'serious' novel to make her case concerning the progressiveness of Hollywood cinema abroad.

Commenting on the Williamson-Kaplan debate, Duncan Webster (1988) opined that Williamson, like many British Leftists, allowed opposition to US foreign policies to cloud her appreciation of American popular culture. Both Kaplan's and Webster's arguments are perplexing since Williamson did not criticise American popular culture specifically in the first place: she questioned the uncritical endorsement of mass popular culture, full stop. And, as Webster himself registered, Williamson (1986b) has made sophisticated and appreciative analyses of popular culture, including American-produced: witness her enthusiasm for Madonna quoted earlier in this chapter. So, what was the counter-attack about? One of the most pervasive dogmas of cultural populism: the remotest hint of anti-Americanism instantly brands the critic a European elitist and, therefore, out of order. Like all easily taken-for-granted domain assumptions, this populist reflex suppresses important questions. For example, does questioning the United States' 'global culture' and raising issues of, say, identity and self-determination in subordinate nations really constitute grounds for being judged a snob? And, furthermore, why should such considerations be construed as necessarily contemptuous of ordinary people's tastes? Incidentally, Williamson never ventured on to such treacherous terrain, though she might have done.

Another issue, and partially separable from political critique, is the crisis of qualitative judgement, not exclusively in communication, cultural and media studies but throughout the humanities. Cultural populism, in one way or another, disputes absolutist criteria of 'quality'. Who is to say whether a text is good or bad, or whether a reading practice is adequate to the text or deficient? By and large, mass culture critics had no doubts on these matters: they were confident in their capacity, usually legitimated by academic position and participation in the networks of 'serious' culture. They felt able to pass judgement on mass cultural consumption, to denounce it comprehensively or to make

evaluative discriminations between the authentically popular and the usual rubbish foisted upon most people. Undiluted cultural elitism no longer washes. Cultural populism dealt it a fatal blow: opening up the range of 'texts' worthy of study (from grand opera to soap opera, from lyric poetry to disco dancing), evincing humility towards popular tastes and installing the active audience at the centre of the picture. None of this is *unpolitical*. It challenges the traditional academic politics of the humanities, as Michael Schudson (1987) quite rightly notes with some dismay, surveying recent developments in the US university system. The drift into relativising populism could put professional critics like himself out of work. Schudson's response is not, however, that of a conservative academic only worried about his job. For him, the present situation poses genuine dilemmas. Schudson welcomes the sociologising of cultural analysis from both the production and consumption ends of the circuit, yet he regrets the decline of the university's moral authority:

I end up caught between a belief that the university should be a moral educator, holding up for emulation some values and some texts (and not others), and a reluctant admission that the basis for defining moral education is an unfinished, often unrecognised task [I]f we learn to be self-conscious about the implicit hierarchies of taste and value we live and teach by, will we locate adequate grounds for our moral claims? What ground can we stand on, especially when the trends that favour relativism are so much more powerful and cogent (to my own mind) than the rather arbitrary and ill-defined hierarchies of value they so po...tedly confront?

(1987: 66-7)

The dilemmas are real enough. Although Schudson does not resolve his own dilemmas, he is courageous to have mentioned them at all, since the pitfalls are so enormous that silence on these matters is undoubtedly the safest and most common option. Like Gripsrud (1989), Schudson slides back into a position where he is obliged to defend the superior judgement of professional criticism on more or less traditionalist grounds. They are both admirably circumspect about doing so. Some others are not, however, like the English critic Tony Dunn. In a notoriously provocative and perhaps tongue-in-cheek *Guardian* article, Dunn (1987) recommended a recovery of uncompromising Wildean elitism as

the best alternative to taking 'the path of populism' which meets 'not the people but video promoters, fashion editors and Arts Council bureaucrats'.

Introducing a collection of essays on 'quality' in television which try to unblock the judgemental *impasse*, Geoff Mulgan (1990) argues that 'an alternative to the stale debate between a crude populism . . . and an equally crude elitism' (p. 6) must be sought. I agree with him, but it is easier said than done. One of the most promising signs, however, is that some latter-day cultural populists have begun to voice self-doubt: for example, Charlotte Brunson. Addressing an American audience, she asked: '*What is good television?*' This has not been a very fashionable question for television scholars in the UK' (1990a: 59). In that paper, Brunson roamed around why the question had been neglected, reviewing literary reception studies, ethnographic and subcultural approaches, and the 'redemptive reading' of popular texts. Wisely perhaps, from her position, she avoided answering the question. In a second stab at the problem, Brunson (1990b) mentioned a 'marked populism' (p. 71) in British television studies, a refusal to judge which eventually winds up in political quietism, especially when faced with urgent policy debates over 'quality television'. So, in order to clarify what might be at stake, she ran through various discourses on 'quality', discarding each in its turn, and reaching no satisfactory solution.

Brunson's discursive survey covered traditional aesthetics, professional codes, realist paradigms, entertainment and leisure codes and moral paradigms. Concluding that cultural populists should reveal their own surreptitious judgements and 'talk about them' (p. 90), Brunson (1990b) effectively proposed greater academic self-consciousness and scholarly reflexivity so that students of popular culture might again be able to speak, at least subjectively, about the unavoidable problem of judgement. Going somewhat further than Brunson was prepared to do, John Mepham (1990) has suggested boldly that 'quality television' is indeed identifiable, if not objectively then intersubjectively. Whatever the programme category, 'serious' or 'popular', quality programming is socially recognisable as *diverse, usable and truthful* – ethical rather than purely aesthetic criteria (Mepham's ideas are considered more fully in Chapter 4).

Circulating around the 'quality' problem for cultural populism is the residual issue of 'progressiveness'. At one time, judgemental

practice in the field of study concentrated heavily on either identifying textual forms that were thought to be intrinsically 'progressive' or, in a more complex version, institutional and historical contexts that were conducive to the reception and activation of potentially 'progressive' meanings (Caughie 1980). This fitted with hegemony theory's emphasis on perpetual 'struggle', not to mention radical populism's contestatory cultural politics. However, in the 1980s, some were to argue that 'progressivism' was far too politically earnest and of doubtful popularity (Ang 1987). It had been assumed that opportunities for alternative and oppositional representations were more favourable in the area of 'serious' rather than 'popular' television, for institutional and ideological reasons (Murdock 1980). This assumption was also widely rejected in cultural populist circles during the 1980s.

In my view, the excessively audience-orientated and one-dimensional consumptionist perspectives have led to a lamentable foreclosure on questions concerning both 'quality', in the broadest sense, and the narrower sense of 'progressiveness', resulting in confused and hopeless silence. Production and textual determinations were too readily dissolved into uncritical constructions of 'popular reading'. However, one also has to remember that earlier positions were excessively political and sometimes tended towards restrictive judgementalism.

Finally, there are explanatory issues that are, in part, separable from political critique and qualitative judgement. This is obvious in a social scientific framework yet not always so evidently the concern of cultural criticism. For example, in his incisive critique of the British monarchy and its role in maintaining an archaic and comparatively undemocratic state, *The Enchanted Glass*, Tom Nairn remarks:

People enjoy the Monarchical twaddle, and show very little sign of being robotized or 'brain-washed'. They relish the weird mixture of cheap fun, exalted moments and great spectacles, and come back for more. Whatever it all means, that meaning is sustained and apparently continually refreshed by a genuine, positive will more significant than any amount of peevish grousing about cost.

(1988: 53)

Nairn is a republican abolitionist, but he believes the monarchy's

popularity has to be understood, not only critiqued or judged. An interpretative, non-judgemental approach, such as that of cultural populism at its best, is indispensable but not, however, sufficiently explanatory.

In a similar vein, Geoffrey Nowell-Smith says with a crystal clarity often lacking in discussions of popular culture: 'the term popular culture retains its value when one is talking about the people who make it popular - that is, when one is talking about the people who keep a particular cultural form going by being the public for it or by being its producers' (1987: 87). That observation summarises the territory traversed in this chapter. Nowell-Smith went on to argue, however, that an exclusive attention to 'the popular' may distract critical analysis from focusing upon how the cultural field works in general. Accordingly, when 'the popular' is suspended, two major realities come sharply into focus:

- 1 Modern culture is capitalist culture . . .
- 2 Modern culture also takes the form of a single intertextual field, whose signifying elements are perpetually being recombined and played off against each other.

(1987: 87)

Contemporary cultural objects are mainly commodities produced and circulated for financial valorisation through exchange and consumption. That is not confined to 'popular' culture. 'High' cultural objects are also caught up in the process of capital accumulation, however much traditionalists may wish to ignore the fact. Of special interest is the postmodern interaction of forms and meanings across once heavily policed borders of cultural value and politics; and the complex relations between symbolic and material configurations at national, global and local levels. The old socio-cultural distinctions and hierarchies have not disappeared but they are becoming less important. Under these conditions, the rediscovery of popular culture is not so daring after all. Nobody is going to be shocked in the Senior Common Room or in the Student Union Bar if you talk about the textual playfulness and popular appeal of the latest Madonna film: it's probably already on the curriculum.

In the world syncretic culture of postmodernity nothing is sacrosanct; no boundary, either hierarchical or spatial, is forever fixed. There are, none the less, persistent tensions between centrifugal and centripetal forces, most importantly between

globalisation and experientially situated cultures. Culture in general is of heightened significance in a world of international information flows and shared forms of popular entertainment, all of which is greatly enhanced by the newer technologies, especially satellite communications (Robins 1989). A crucial analytical task now is to reconnect interpretation and understanding, of one's own culture and of others, with explanation of the structures and processes that are recomposing these cultures. As Graham Murdock (1989a), for instance, has rightly observed, the 'interplay between the symbolic and the economic' (p. 45) has never been more pronounced and demanding of critical attention. Murdock (1989b) also calls for a renewal of interdisciplinarity, a breaking down of intellectual barriers between theoretical disciplines and methodologies, to address changing material conditions and cultural locations, broadening out rather than narrowing in.

Over the next two chapters, in order to concretise the arguments made so far, I shall discuss past and present work on youth culture and television, the two principal foci of British cultural populism, and in the final chapters discuss issues which transcend its self-imposed limitations.

NOTES

- 1 Andrew Ross (1989) has shown how the Frankfurt School critique appealed to Dwight MacDonal's (1953) erstwhile Trotskyism, initially opposed to the American Communist Party's populist cultural politics, launched in the 1930s and still evident around the Rosenberg spy trial of the early 1950s (see Ross's fascinating study of this in his first chapter). The American version of the mass culture critique fused with liberal Cold Warism, bringing Leftists like MacDonal himself, Irving Howe, Norman Mailer and C. Wright Mills into an implicit alliance with real Cold Warriors such as Leslie Fiedler and the *Encounter* writers. It is interesting to note, in light of Ross's historical excavation, that *Marxism Today's* populism, which became so controversial on the Left at its height during the 1980s before the magazine's closure in the wake of Soviet communism's collapse in 1991, was actually quite consistent with a long tradition of Western communist strategy.
- 2 Richard Hoggart gave impassioned witness to the literary merit of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* at the obscenity trial of Penguin Books in 1960 (see Sutherland 1982). He also served on the Pilkington Broadcasting Committee, which criticised ITV's commercialism and recommended the setting up of BBC2. Hoggart is reputed to have written the Pilkington Report, though he denies this himself (Corner 1991). He

- left Birmingham to become Deputy Director of UNESCO at the end of the 1960s and, in the 1970s, his major public role was as Vice-Chairman of the Arts Council of Great Britain.
- 3 John McGrath's ideas can be seen within a radical tradition stretching back at least to William Morris, the late-nineteenth-century Romantic Marxist. Morris's Utopian novel, *News from Nowhere* (1890/1970), projected a post-revolutionary and *post-industrial* 'golden age' into the future. He believed that human happiness depended on the bringing together of art and work, so that everyone would become a *cultural producer*. See E.P. Thompson (1977) on the educative value of such revolutionary romanticism.
 - 4 Andrew Tolson (1986) has made a Foucauldian critique of the OU Popular Culture course's political pretensions.
 - 5 See Simon Clarke *et al.* (1980) for criticisms of Althusserian-influenced film studies and E.P. Thompson's (1979) much-debated critique of Louis Althusser and his British followers. Both Colin MacCabe (1976) and Laura Mulvey (1981) produced important auto-critiques of their earlier positions. Also, see Willemsen (1978) and Williams (1977b) for criticisms of 'Screen theory'. A more sympathetic treatment, which also gives a psychoanalytic and poststructuralist gloss to the OU Popular Culture course, is Antony Easthope's (1988) book, *British Post-structuralism*.
 - 6 Tony Bennett (1980) includes 'history from below', associated with E.P. Thompson (1963) and Sheila Rowbotham (1973), in his fourth category of popular culture. Also, see Schwarz (1982) in the Birmingham CCCS's (1982b) major publication on cultural history.
 - 7 John Fiske's position is not only indicative of the critical decline of British cultural studies, for which he is considered a leading representative in Australia and the United States, though not so much in Britain. Fiske's own brand of uncritical populism goes back much further, at least to his association with John Hartley at the Polytechnic of Wales. Their 1978 book, *Reading Television*, for instance, extolled television's 'bardic function' in contrast to the then more influential critiques of broadcasting's function as an apparatus of dominant ideology.
 - 8 Madonna is a rather problematic case for exclusively consumptionist analysis since she is not just any old pop star but a generally recognised 'author' and controller of her own commodified image. She is, moreover, prepared to take creative and calculatedly commercial risks with her popularity. The 1990 'Blond Ambition' Tour which was subsequently exploited by her film, *In Bed with Madonna* (1991), broke the bounds of respectability and brought the censure of the Vatican down on Madonna's deliberately subversive head. See Skeggs (1991) for a defence of Madonna's erotic politics against feminist criticisms.