CRITICAL HABITATIONS:
CULTURAL STUDIES AND THE
POLITICS OF INTELLECTUAL LOCATION

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ABSTRACT

Over the past four or so decades, a number of social transformations—including in particular the dramatic expansion of the tertiary education sector—have impacted significantly on the role and status of the intellectual in contemporary life. While the authority of the intellectual was once based on a claim to universality, the openly professionalised nature of contemporary intellectual life has thoroughly problematised such claims. Accordingly, the broadly representative role that so-called “public” intellectuals were once said to have played has increasingly been challenged by more “specific” models of intellectual practice, models that have emerged in particular out of new fields of knowledge such as cultural studies. While cultural conservatives have argued that this challenge marks the declining status of the intellectual in contemporary society, the emergence of a variety of “new” intellectual models linked to specific social and institutional formations suggests that, far from declining, concerns over the status and responsibility of the intellectual are ongoing.

This thesis examines the complex relations between contemporary intellectual practices and social and cultural location. Focusing in particular on the field of cultural studies, I examine the careers and biographies of four intellectuals. In my introductory chapter I review the major theories of intellectual practice circulating within cultural studies and conclude that a new, more “located” approach to understanding intellectual practice is required. Putting this new approach to work, the first part of my thesis examines the personal and intellectual biography of the black British intellectual Stuart Hall and—using the trope of “diaspora”—positions him in relation to the field of British cultural studies. In part two I focus on the largely academically-situated intellectual practices of Lawrence Grossberg and Andrew Ross, two prominent American-based cultural studies practitioners. Taking them as exemplars of American cultural studies, a highly academicised and disciplined field, I place into question the common assumption that the institutionally-located intellectual lacks critical autonomy. In part three, I discuss the life and career of the Australian intellectual, Meaghan Morris, focusing on the transnational and trans-institutional genealogy of both Morris and the Sydney-based strand of cultural studies with which she is associated. Finally, I conclude the thesis with a brief postscript reiterating my argument for the increasing importance of a
“comparative cosmopolitan” model of intellectualism—that is, an approach to intellectuals that is able to engage with both broad-based and transnational concerns while, at the same time, also acknowledging their responsibilities as a geographically and socially-situated group.
DECLARATION

This is to certify that

i. the thesis comprises only my original work.

ii. due acknowledgment has been made in the text to all other material used.

iii. the thesis is less than 100,000 words in length, exclusive of tables, maps, bibliographies, appendices and footnotes.

Signed: ____________________

Date: ____________________
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PREFACE
The expansion and democratisation of universities alongside the growing power of the media and other “culture industries” among advanced capitalist nations since the 1950s has resulted in intellectuals becoming increasingly incorporated within professional structures and hierarchies. In the world of academia, for instance, this process has been accompanied by a growing awareness of the problematic status of the transcendent figure of the “universal” intellectual. Rather than marking the death of the intellectual, however, debates over this issue have seen a pluralisation of approaches to the contemporary intellectual and a foregrounding of the question of the intellectual’s relationship to power.

According to Peter Osborne, the main responses to this latter question have tended to fall into two camps. The first approach, as reflected in the work of critical humanists like Edward Said, has been primarily concerned with the intellectual’s role as a representative of a complex, post-Habermasian “public” sphere.\(^1\) In Said’s model, it is the responsibility of the intellectual to disavow his/her professional location in order to uphold certain “universal principles” and, in particular, “to confront orthodoxy and dogma” on the behalf of “a public.”\(^2\) The second approach is that of Foucault, who has crucially argued against the representative function of intellectuals and its accompanying notion of universality, offering up instead the notion of the “specific” intellectual. As he argued in his essay “Truth and Power,” while leftist thought was once dominated by a conception of the intellectual as a figure who, like the proletariat, was “the bearer of the universal,” contemporary intellectuals now operate at the precise points where their own conditions of life or work situate them (housing, the hospital, the asylum, the laboratory, the university, family and sexual relations).\(^3\) As Osborne points out, however, Foucault’s argument contains certain contradictions in so far as his intellectuals are not quite as “specific” as they might at first seem for their local struggles can, according to Foucault, produce universalising effects.\(^4\) In other words, while the intellectual is located within certain structures of power, he/she is seen as being able to struggle with, and move beyond, those same structures.

\(^4\) Osborne xvii.
In this thesis I explore ways of theorising the practices of contemporary intellectuals that involve recognising the mutually constitutive nature of the critical potential of intellectuals and their social location; that is, I want to foreground the productive and enabling nature of the power structures that constitute and “frame” all intellectual activity, critical or otherwise. In particular, I focus on the field of cultural studies and on the practices of four intellectuals associated with this field, namely, Stuart Hall, Lawrence Grossberg, Andrew Ross and Meaghan Morris. I have chosen to foreground cultural studies as an intellectual formation for two reasons: firstly, cultural studies emerged post-World War Two as a response to the dramatic social and cultural transformation that accompanied the shift towards late-modernity within western states making it a particularly appropriate site for an examination of contemporary intellectual practices; secondly, from the outset cultural studies has been concerned with validating the culture and knowledges of marginalised groups. Accordingly, one of the central debates occurring within cultural studies has occurred around the “division of knowledge” between what John Frow calls the specialised “caste of intellectuals” and “its others,” marking it out as one of the more intellectually self-reflexive fields of knowledge.  

This reflexive approach to questions of knowledge and power has meant that cultural studies practitioners have been particularly attuned to the kinds of problems raised by contemporary intellectual models such as those articulated by Said and Foucault. Like Said, some have argued that one of the main duties of the engaged intellectual is to champion the cause of marginalised groups, such as women of colour or the working classes. Following in Foucault’s footsteps, however, a number of other cultural studies theorists have suggested a more modest and limited role for intellectuals based around the specific sites and institutions in which intellectuals live and work. While often informed by a concern with social marginality and the “politics of representation,” these approaches, however, have tended to replicate rather than resolve the lingering universalism highlighted by Osborne. In particular, what these models often have in common is a desire to construct an *a priori* account of the role of the intellectual, an approach which inevitably ends up reproducing the totalising and prescriptive aspects of universal models of intellectualism. In this thesis, I argue that the practices of *actual* cultural studies intellectuals are too differentiated to be summed up within one model or paradigm. In particular, I suggest that contemporary intellectual practices are

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the product of the intersection of a number of specific social formations whether they be governmental, cultural, political or social. What distinguishes my account from other approaches, then, is its concern with providing an analysis which starts out from the local. An important qualification needs to be made here regarding such an orientation. Lawrence Grossberg has recently problematised the turn towards the local in cultural theory noting that it often reflects “an assumed identification of the local with the site of agency and resistance,” an identification, which as Grossberg points out tends to involve equating “individual will and social agency.” In my account, however, the local is not treated as a site existing prior to or outside of social institutions but rather is analysed as a means of foregrounding the specific ways in which intellectual formations are articulated to such institutions. Rather than privileging a voluntarist model of intellectualism, then, my focus on four different cultural studies practitioners offers a way of foregrounding the localised and diverse nature of intellectual formations. In this sense my thesis can be seen as drawing upon another model of the local discussed by Grossberg, namely a “geographical” conception “in which the local is always a comparative term, describing the different articulations at different places within a structuring of space.”

This thesis is organised as follows. My introductory chapter sets up the broader theoretical problematics that frame and inform the thesis, focussing in particular on the broad question of intellectual location. In the first section of that chapter I describe the main and mostly sociologically-oriented models of intellectual practice circulating within contemporary cultural studies. In the second section I move on to an account of the debates over national versus transnational or cosmopolitan accounts of culture. Through a discussion of the issue of the social and cultural location of the intellectual as it is played out in the field of cultural studies, I argue for the importance of conceptualising the specific intellectuals under discussion in both local and comparative terms.

My analysis of these four intellectuals is divided into three parts—each being situated in relation to a specific national cultural studies formation. Thus in Part One, I discuss the intellectual biography of the black, British intellectual Stuart Hall in relation to the field of

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British cultural studies. Reading against the grain of conventional class- and nation-based accounts of the field, my revisionist narrative positions Hall as a *diasporic* intellectual caught not only between shifting cultural/national identities but between class and gender formations. In Part Two, the largest section of the thesis, I provide a disciplinary history of the vast and complex field of American cultural studies, grounding my genealogy in an account of the intellectual practices of Lawrence Grossberg and Andrew Ross. Discussing the *professionalised* nature of their intellectual practices, I problematise those accounts of cultural studies that construct institutionalised and engaged intellectual practices as mutually exclusive. In Part Three, I discuss the life and career of Australian cultural studies theorist, Meaghan Morris. Adopting the trope of *local cosmopolitanism*, I argue that both Morris, and the Sydney-based “brand” of cultural studies with which she is associated, emerged out of a complex intersection between local and transnational political and intellectual formations. Finally, in my Postscript I return to the problem of specific versus generalist models of intellectual practice. While reinforcing the need to foreground the diverse and localised character of intellectual work, I argue that the increasingly globalised nature of the intellectual community calls for an approach that is both grounded, comparative and cosmopolitan.

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INTRODUCTION
CULTURAL STUDIES AS INTELLECTUAL PRACTICE:
MODELS AND METHODOLOGIES

Introduction

Over the past decade, cultural studies has expanded to become what Jon Stratton and Ien Ang recently described as “one of the most lively and widely-discussed intellectual fields in the international academic world.”

While once primarily associated with a specifically British-based field of inquiry, over the past decade cultural studies has increasingly gained legitimacy as an academic field throughout the world with departments, programmes and centres emerging in sites as diverse as the US, South Africa, Hong Kong, Australia, Taiwan, Finland, Canada, Sweden, New Zealand and Poland. At the same time, cultural studies has been embraced by a number of major international publishing houses including Routledge and Sage, a process that has seen the publication of a growing number of cultural studies readers and primers as well as the recent emergence of two new international cultural studies journals, namely the *International Journal of Cultural Studies* and the *European Journal of Cultural Studies*.

The rapid internationalisation and “academicisation” of cultural studies has not surprisingly generated a significant amount of debate over what type of work constitutes “cultural studies” and over its future directions. These debates often focus on the origins and formation of the field and have tended to split along two lines. On the one hand, those practitioners concerned with what they see as the increasingly disciplinised state of international cultural studies tend to recuperate its origins at Birmingham as a critical, anti-institutional moment to which cultural studies formations around the world should aspire. On the other hand, a growing number of cultural studies practitioners from countries and regions such as Australia, Asia and Africa have argued against the tendency to privilege cultural studies’ development at Birmingham as the blueprint against which all cultural studies formations should be measured. This particular line of argument, for instance, has seen a number of postcolonial, feminist and black cultural studies theorists offering critiques of

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what see they see as the tendency to mythicise cultural studies’ development at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS), a formation that they argue was up until relatively recently limited by its blindness to race and gender issues and by an adherence to an implicit and unreflexive nationalism.

Regardless of their diagnostic accuracy, what both these narratives highlight is the need for cultural studies to rethink and remap its origins and trajectories in the face of its recent transnational expansion and institutionalisation. While the cultural studies “readers” and edited collections that have been emerging throughout the nineties, for instance, represent a certain kind of mapping of the international cultural studies project, their representation of the cultural studies *oeuvre* via fragments of writings extracted from the broader contexts of their production tends to erase rather than highlight the specific socio-political and institutional conditions from which cultural studies has emerged in its various forms. Likewise, a number of articles and chapters in edited collections have attempted to discuss the internationalisation of cultural studies but again the authors tend to be less concerned with foregrounding the specific contexts in which cultural studies practitioners live and work than they are with mounting more abstract, theoretical arguments about the dangers and/or possibilities accompanying the transnationalisation of cultural studies.

My thesis intervenes in this broader debate over the global expansion of cultural studies. However, instead of continuing in the vein of the “broad overview” genre that has come to dominate the field, I am interested in providing a more “grounded” account of the state of play within contemporary cultural studies. Starting from the understanding that cultural studies has from the outset been concerned with *the politics of intellectual work*, the central problematic of this thesis is to think through the histories and practices of cultural studies in relation to particular intellectuals working in the field. Blundell and colleagues have recently argued that “cultural studies does not lend itself easily to the writing of histories or the descriptions of schools. The most that is possible is accounts from various practitioners, each account being informed by the practitioner’s own biography and relation to cultural studies.” In light of the hegemony of British-based narratives, I think it is important to construct alternative cultural studies genealogies however partial or fragmented. I also,

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however, share Blundell et al.’s concern with developing a more biographical or particularist approach to mapping cultural studies practices. What I map out in this thesis, then, is a genealogy that emerges directly out of an examination of the careers of specific cultural studies intellectuals. Thus, while my thesis is divided into three sections on British, American and Australian cultural studies respectively, the discussion in each section is not offered up as a definitive account or survey of the field. Instead, by focusing on the intellectual biographies of four specific cultural studies practitioners, I offer a partial account of cultural studies and its various national formations; one which is primarily grounded in a politics of *intellectual location*. What is useful and somewhat unorthodox about this approach is that it enables insights into the ways in which cultural studies and its unique intellectual practices have developed. This shift away from the more abstracted approach that has tended to dominate historical accounts of cultural studies to a focus on the specific types of intellectual practice that have shaped the field requires a more complex understanding of questions of intellectual location than that provided by the kind of humanist model traditionally implied by the notion of the intellectual biography. While I use the biographies of specific intellectuals to trace certain genealogies within cultural studies, I am interested less in the individual life stories of these intellectuals than I am in locating the broader material conditions that have formed their intellectual practices and that have in turn produced a distinctive mode of cultural studies work. At the same time I am concerned with mapping the genealogies and practices of cultural studies in a way that can take into account the specificity of intellectual work.

Accordingly, this introductory part of my thesis is divided into two sections, namely a discussion of the location of intellectuals firstly in relation to class, professionalism and governmentality and secondly in terms of nationalism versus cosmopolitanism. Thus, in the first section of the discussion I examine theories of *social location* as they have been applied to cultural studies and its intellectual practices. In particular, I focus on cultural studies’ appropriation of Gramsci’s notion of the organic intellectual as well as on a number of alternative intellectual models, using these models as a departure point for thinking about a specifically cultural studies-derived model of intellectual practice. In the second section I move on to discuss the question of intellectual location more specifically in relation to the debates over national versus trans-national accounts of cultural studies. My introduction thus sets up two primary areas of concern dealt with in the thesis: firstly, the tension between
particularist versus generalist accounts of the social location of intellectuals; and secondly, the uneasy relationship between the nationally-based logic that still largely structures cultural studies accounts and an emergent cosmopolitan conception of cultural studies and its intellectual practices. The distinctive approach I develop in the thesis thus emerges out of, and responds to these tensions, drawing upon cultural studies’ own theories of social context and location in order to forge a flexible model of intellectual practice able to account for the general and the specific, the historical and the biographical.

I. THE SOCIAL LOCATION OF THE CULTURAL STUDIES INTELLECTUAL

As I have argued elsewhere, contemporary accounts of the intellectual from the popular conservatism of American critic Allan Bloom to the left/liberal commentary of Australian Labour Party stalwart Barry Jones, tend to be similarly preoccupied with recuperating a universalist or socially transcendent mode of intellectualism. That is, whether posed in terms of the rhetoric of the “public” intellectual employed by Jones or constructed along the lines of Bloom’s liberally educated generalist, the kind of model idealised in much contemporary criticism is that of the Enlightenment intellectual whose discourse of rational, disinterested critique is represented as being free from social grounding or political bias. One of the major models of intellectualism adopted by cultural studies, namely the Marxist model of the organic intellectual, however, appears to mark a radical break with these more traditional conceptions of the role of the intellectual. Problematising the figure of the universalist or free-floating thinker, Gramsci’s notion of the organic intellectual works to specify the claims of all intellectuals by identifying them with the interests of particular class formations. While within contemporary cultural studies writings Gramsci’s organic intellectual is just as likely to be grounded in other “identity” formations such as gender or race rather than class, what is radical about this model is that its openly politicised, identity-based approach places into question the claims to neutrality made in the name of universalist models of intellectualism.

However, in the following discussion I want to raise a number of questions about the way in which certain cultural studies theorists have adapted and used Gramsci’s organic intellectual to “ground” or authorise their work. In particular, I question whether cultural studies’

preoccupation with representing the interests of the popular sphere, or “the people,” does in fact represent a complete break with the universalist tendencies of the traditional intellectual. Discussing some of the critiques of cultural studies’ particular mobilisation of the figure of the organic intellectual, I outline three alternative intellectual accounts that attempt to locate the cultural studies practitioner within a broader social context: firstly as members of a knowledge class, secondly in terms of their link with structures of governmentality, and thirdly in relation to the culture of professionalism. This examination of what I identify as the major theories impacting on cultural studies’ understanding of the politics of intellectual location thus helps to set the scene for my subsequent analysis of the specific intellectual practices of Hall, Grossberg, Ross and Morris.

i. “All men are intellectuals:” Cultural Studies and the Organic Intellectual

In a paper given by Stuart Hall at the seminal 1990 “Cultural Studies Now and in the Future” conference in Illinois entitled “Cultural Studies and its Theoretical Legacies,” Hall offers a self-consciously autobiographical journey back through the various theoretical movements that have contributed to the development of cultural studies at Birmingham. Tracing cultural studies’ troubled relationship with Marxism, he discusses in particular the role that Italian theorist Antonio Gramsci’s work played in offering cultural studies a critical alternative to traditional Marxist approaches. Over and above his radical rearticulation of Marxist theory, however, Hall argues that one of Gramsci’s major contributions to cultural studies was the way in which his work foregrounded “the need to reflect on our institutional position, and our intellectual practice.” In what has become a much cited section of the article, Hall goes on to highlight the crucial role that Gramsci’s notion of the organic intellectual played as a exemplary model for the intellectual work being done at the CCCS.

[T]here is no doubt in my mind that we were trying to find an institutional practice in cultural studies that might produce an organic intellectual. We didn’t know previously what that would mean, in the context of Britain in the 1970s, and we weren’t sure we would recognise him or her if we managed to produce it. The

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problem about the concept of an organic intellectual is that it appears to align intellectuals with an emerging historic movement and we couldn’t tell then, and can hardly tell now, where that emerging historical moment was to be found. We were organic intellectuals without any organic point of reference; organic intellectuals with a nostalgia or will or hope (to use Gramsci’s phrase from another context) that at some point we would be prepared in intellectual work for that kind of relationship, if such a conjuncture ever appeared. More truthfully, we were prepared to imagine or model or simulate such a relationship in its absence: ‘pessimism of the intellect, optimism of the will.’

In his review of the Illinois conference, Fredric Jameson argues that, though seldom expressed in the openly utopian terms that mark Hall’s account, “the desire called the organic intellectual is omnipresent here,” and I would add that it continues, for a number of reasons, to represent the implicit model of intellectual practice for many cultural studies theorists. Before I proceed to examine and problematise some of the ways in which the figure of the organic intellectual has been adopted by cultural studies, however, I want to briefly discuss Gramsci’s account of the role and social location of the intellectual.

One of the key areas addressed by Gramsci in the “notes” he made during the eleven years he spent in a fascist prison in the 1920s and 1930s was the question of the intellectual and his/her place within Marxism. His crucial contribution to debates over the role and status of the intellectual lay in his attempt to demystify and thereby democratise the role of intellectuals by questioning the traditional conception that this group was endowed with superior moral and cultural judgement. Instead, he argued that all individuals possess intellectual abilities. What made a person an intellectual was, according to Gramsci, his/her social function rather than any innate ability. Thus, for Gramsci, definitions of the intellectual should not be based on “the intrinsic nature of intellectual activities” but rather should be concerned with “the system of relations in which these activities (and therefore the intellectual groups who personify them) have their place within the general complex of social relations.”

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17 Gramsci 7.
Accordingly, in his now famous distinction between traditional and organic intellectuals, Gramsci defined the former as those “categories of intellectuals already in existence and which seemed indeed to represent an historical continuity uninterrupted even by the most complicated and radical changes in political and social forms” but who are in reality bound to the dominant class. Organic intellectuals, on the other hand, could be drawn from any social class. As Gramsci argued, every social group providing an essential economic function requires a cadre of organic intellectuals to give that particular social stratum “homogeneity and an awareness of its own function not only in the economic but also in the social and political fields.” Thus, in contrast to traditional intellectuals, organic intellectuals derive their authority not from professional status or from their claims to exist in a free-floating, ahistorical space but purely from their attachment to a particular social class.

The formulation of this organic conception of intellectualism places into question conventional notions of intellectual practice as abstracted from social relations or more specifically from labour processes. While there has tended to be a conceptual split between manual and intellectual labour whereby intellectuality is traditionally associated with “the man of letters, the philosopher, the artist,” Gramsci’s notion of an organic intellectual involved rethinking the relationship between physical labour and intellect. Thus, he insisted that “the mode of being of the new intellectual can no longer consist in eloquence, which is an exterior and momentary mover of feelings and passions, but in active participation in practical life, as constructor, organiser, ‘permanent persuader’ and not just a simple orator.” However, Gramsci added an important qualification to this argument. That is, while he suggested that all social groups are capable of forming their own intellectuals, he also acknowledged the fact that the figure of the organic intellectual, in particular that of the proletarian intellectual, was an ideal rather than a social reality. Accordingly, he observed that the actual formation of intellectuals “does not take place on the terrain of abstract democracy” noting instead that intellectuals are traditionally the product of specific dominant class formations such as the petty bourgeoisie.

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18 Gramsci 7.
19 Gramsci 5.
20 Gramsci 9.
21 Gramsci 10.
ii. The Dilemmas of Organicity

Gramsci’s account thus shuttled between a focus on “the real historical process of formation of the different categories of intellectuals”\(^\text{23}\) and the more idealistic terrain suggested by the figure of the organic intellectual. Not surprisingly, however, it is this latter terrain that has attracted many cultural studies practitioners to Gramsci. In particular, his image of the organic intellectual actively engaged “in practical life” can be seen to nicely complement cultural studies’ often populist aspirations. The rather idealised interpretation of the organic intellectual that has tended to circulate within cultural studies has, however, recently come under attack from some practitioners in the field. In the discussion that follows I examine the main criticisms that have been made of cultural studies’ appropriation of the organic intellectual before moving on to discuss some of the alternative models that have more recently emerged within left cultural criticism.

In his book *Cultural Studies and Cultural Value* published in 1995, John Frow singles out the organic intellectual, and in particular the Stuart Hall quote cited above, as exemplifying a crucial problematic for cultural studies. In particular, he suggests that one reading of Hall’s “imaginary relationship” of organicity with a broader historic bloc is that it works to disavow the cultural studies intellectual’s connection to a class formation—that is, the knowledge class—“with its own historic goals.”\(^\text{24}\) The concern here for Frow is that the model of the organic intellectual not only tends to gloss over the specific class affiliations of cultural studies practitioners but it also permits them to mis-recognise their own specific cultural and political concerns as being those of “the people.” For Frow, the desire for organicity is marked by a refusal on the part of intellectuals to face the facts of their own social specificity. Through the kinds of narratives offered up by Hall, then, “the cultural intelligentsia...has been able to construct its own historicity only in the endless deferral of its self-recognition.”\(^\text{25}\)

Hall, as I discuss later in the thesis, is of course fully aware of the class location of cultural studies intellectuals. As he goes on to point out himself, following his discussion of the CCCS’s desire to produce organic intellectuals, such figures are often caught between their

\(^{22}\) Gramsci 11.

\(^{23}\) Gramsci 5.

\(^{24}\) Frow 129.

\(^{25}\) Frow 130.
membership of the knowledge class and their sense of responsibility in terms of transmitting their knowledge “to those who do not belong, professionally, in the intellectual class.” But, according to Frow, it is precisely this belief that intellectuals might have a responsibility to, and therefore an organic bond with, the non-professional classes that has led cultural studies into problematic territory. As Frow observes

[c]ultural studies has been prolific of attempts to reconcile the division of knowledge, to overcome the split between reflexive knowledge and its others. The characteristic masks in which it performs have been those of the organic intellectual, the fan, the participant observer; or, more deceptively it has worn the invisible mask of a humanism which supposes the common identity and the common interests of the knower and the known.27

In contrast to Frow, Rita Felski offers a more positive evaluation of cultural studies’ appropriation of Gramsci’s organic intellectual arguing as she does that cultural studies has attempted to offer a genuine alternative to the universal intellectual. In particular, she contends that it has reformulated the process of the legitimation of knowledge whereby cultural studies intellectuals’ authority derives not from their disinterestedness but rather from their role as representatives of the specific interests of marginalised social groups. As Felski notes, for cultural studies “[t]he ultimate value of intellectual work...derives not from the innate wisdom of an academic elite but from the writer’s affiliation with a broader, supra-academic community,”28 a community that was once centred around class but has more recently moved towards an incorporation of race, gender and sexuality. According to Felski, what is truly unique about cultural studies’ shift towards a new model of intellectualism is the fact “that it marks the academic institutionalisation of the idea of the organic intellectual [whereby a] researcher’s political alliances are no longer a contingent, implicit influence upon his or her academic work, but are explicitly acknowledged and theorised as an integral part of the methodology and procedures of a research programme.”29 This reflexive politicisation of the research process has also been accompanied by a scepticism towards disciplinarity and specialisation, a process which Felski links in turn with the shift towards

26 Hall, “Cultural Studies and its Theoretical Legacies,” 281.
27 Frow 2.
popular culture as an privileged object of study. The contemporary popular realm, then, is seen as a utopian site for cultural studies where distinctions between high and mass culture are increasingly blurred and where the institutional restrictions on cultural knowledge can be transcended.

However, while Felski does not doubt the liberatory intentions of cultural studies’ attempt to break down the boundaries between academic institutions and the culture of the “everyday,” like Frow she voices the concern that “the intellectual’s fascination with the popular is a double-edged enterprise, which may signal both a genuine desire to disinvest oneself of privilege and a strategic masking of the reality of that same privilege.”\(^{30}\) As Felski argues, the model of organic intellectualism embraced by cultural studies does attempt to foreground its own partiality in the process of knowledge production thereby problematising the claims to neutrality of the universal intellectual. However, at the same time it unfortunately replicates some of the same problems as its humanist counterpart. Thus, while cultural studies purports to be interested in the sense that it explicitly grounds its knowledge production in its organic relation to an “other” social group, like the universal intellectual, its practitioners tend to continue to draw their intellectual authority from a social space other than their own. That is, while they foreground their own political or epistemological location, they tend at the same time to gloss over their membership within a particular social group or institution. What both Frow and Felski’s critiques suggest, then, is that many cultural studies practitioners tend to rely upon an interpretation of Gramsci’s organic intellectual that is excessively voluntarist rather than structural in orientation. In this voluntarist interpretation, the organic intellectual often becomes an alibi for the intellectual’s desire to transcend his/her social limitations.

iii. The Knowledge Class

As the foregoing discussion suggests, a number of cultural theorists have expressed their dissatisfaction with this voluntarist model of intellectualism and have called for a more socially located account of the role and status of the cultural intellectual. In this next section, then, I discuss some of these alternative models. In particular, I examine Frow’s account of

\(^{29}\) Felski 162.

\(^{30}\) Felski 166.
intellectuals as members of a knowledge class, Tony Bennett’s argument concerning the
governmentalised nature of the cultural intellectual, and Bruce Robbins’ emphasis on the
relationship between intellectuals and professionalism. What is useful about these three
models is that they suggest ways of thinking about the practices of cultural studies
intellectuals in ways that situate those practices in relation to broader social and institutional
contexts.

In contrast to cultural studies’ interpretation of Gramsci’s organic intellectual as an ethical
stance that can be self-reflexively adopted by scholars, in *Cultural Studies and Cultural
Value* John Frow employs a more structural or sociological approach to cultural studies and
its intellectual practices. This shift towards a more sociologically-oriented understanding of
the category of intellectuals is largely enabled by the adoption and adaptation of two
analytical approaches, namely Pierre Bourdieu’s theories regarding the operations of cultural
distinction (in particular, his notion of cultural capital), and that strain of Marxist theory that
attempts to locate intellectuals as members of a particular class or class fragment. Like
Gramsci, Frow wishes to break with conventional accounts in which the intellectual is
pictured as a figure of universality, possessing innate qualities of critical reason and social
detachment. Instead, he seeks to locate intellectuals within a broader set of social relations as
a distinct social category of labourers “whose work is socially defined as being based upon
the possession and exercise of knowledge, whether that knowledge be prestigious or routine,
technical or speculative.”31 In other words, Frow represents intellectuals as a fraction of the
knowledge class. He further argues that the structures of late-capitalism have led to the
formation of this class, a class that he contends bears a distinctive relation to the mode of
production due to the unique ability of its members to convert knowledge into cultural
capital. As a number of class theorists from Alvin Gouldner to the Ehrenreichs have
argued,32 the formation of a New Class with a coherent set of interests rests on the
legitimization of certain kinds of knowledge while subordinating the “traditional” knowledges
of the working class, a process that obviously places into question the supposedly progressive
impulse behind cultural studies’ preoccupation with representing popular culture.

31 Frow 90.
However, as Frow points out, the relationship between the knowledge class and the working class is more complicated than the mental/manual binary suggests. While certain types of knowledge can be privately owned (hence the development of intellectual property rights), it is those who possess the means of production rather than the knowledge class itself that ultimately own whatever is defined as “knowledge.” In contrast, Frow contends, “knowledge which is in the public domain circulates within the institutions of science, the professions and education, rather than being the property of its individual users.”

Knowledge workers possess cultural capital only in so far as they have legitimate access to—and are able to determine the bounds of—the domain of knowledge, a domain that is always potentially subject to various forms of external control.

Thus, the tentative nature of definitions of the knowledge class stems from the fact that rather than having a direct claim to the ownership and control of the means of production, knowledge workers derive their social status from their possession of cultural capital. However, as Frow argues after Erik Olin Wright, “the possession of skill assets (knowledge) does not in itself constitute an exploitative relation to those without them.”

The relationship between the knowledge class, a barely coherent “structure” that is internally fractured by multiple sectors (that often find themselves in a subordinate relation to other sectors of the knowledge class), and the working class can hardly be characterised as one of direct exploitation. Instead, as Frow concludes, the knowledge class “is structured by the indirectness of its insertion in the relations of production.”

Thus the complex and often contradictory interests of the knowledge class within the political sphere stem from the fact that this class, “a class which is necessarily-not-for-itself....which is coherent only in its lack of structural cohesion,” articulates with, and defines itself in relation to, a variety of other social formations, such as the education system.

In the process of attempting to “locate” cultural intellectuals as members of a defined social group, Frow concedes that many theorists might question the efficacy of a project primarily driven by class analysis. He acknowledges, for example, the validity of the criticisms aimed

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33 Frow 120.
34 Frow 127.
35 Frow 127.
36 Frow 127.
at class theory; in particular, the argument that, in its traditional Marxist form, it tends to treat social groups in an essentialist manner, reducing complex social processes to a purely economic rationale. However, without a theory of class Frow claims that “we can no longer explain the crucial aspects of the role of cultural capital in production and in the exercise of political and ideological power [and we become unable to see] the interests that limit, but also constitute, the power of theoretical work.”

iv. Intellectuals as Agents of Governmentality

A number of other related critical discourses have sought to rescue cultural studies from voluntarist or ethical models of intellectualism by linking intellectual practice historically or genealogically to particular social and institutional structures. For example, one way in which John O’Carroll (drawing upon the writings of Régis Debray) suggests that cultural studies can preserve “the intellectual reflexive space of knowledge,” while recognising its own fraught relationship with the popular realm it often claims to represent, is to locate the cultural studies intellectual within a broader genealogy of the intellectual as “clerk.” Thus, for O’Carroll a truly reflexive intellectual practice needs to be conscious of

[t]he memory of our strictures—of the fact that we are part of a conservative pedagogical institution whose ongoing structures of research and teaching are clerical, that we are paid by the always conservative government and that the senates and boards of governors do actually oversee the constitution of the hierarchies which oversee our own paid work—these are our conditions of employment as CSI [cultural studies intellectuals], our history and ongoing contract.

Another Australian-based theorist who has also utilised a similar genealogical understanding of the role of the intellectual, this time one drawn directly from Foucault’s account of the relations between intellectual formations and the institutions of governmentality, is the cultural policy theorist Tony Bennett. In his recently published book, Culture: A Reformer’s Science, Bennett argues that a central problem within cultural studies is the fact that its

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37 Frow 98.
39 O’Carroll, 178.
practitioners are, for the most part, blind to their own historical role as agents of
governmentality, viewing themselves as external or transcendent to “the state or the
management of culture.” From such a perspective, cultural policy intellectuals tend to be
associated with the state and its various apparatuses and are often viewed as little more than
functionaries. In contrast, university-based cultural studies practitioners tend to see
themselves as operating within an autonomous critical realm where they are at least relatively
protected from the controlling gaze of the state.

Bennett argues, however, that the relations between cultural studies and cultural policy are
better understood not as “two separate realms (critique and the state) but, rather, [as] the
articulations between two branches of government.” That is, he suggests that the role of the
critic and the bureaucratic, rather than being fundamentally opposed social categories, are
structurally related. By emphasising the contiguity between theoretical work and processes
of governmentality, however, he is not suggesting that the institutional settings of the
university and the policy bureau are the same. Rather, he is concerned that the widespread
misconception of the university “as an autonomous, uncontaminated realm of critique...[has
led to] the resolute failure of so many university teachers working within cultural studies to
recognise that their position within a university objectively situates them within the realm of
government.” Furthermore, he places into question the intellectual’s desire to escape from
such disciplinary structures into the realm of culture arguing that, rather than representing a
site of resistance to institutions of power, the sphere of culture is itself “deeply
governmentalised.”

How then should critical intellectuals aware of their historical role vis-à-vis modernity and
the state position themselves politically? Bennett suggests replacing the model of the
oppositional cultural critic with “a more prosaic conception of the intellectual politics of
cultural studies.” In response to both Hall and Jameson’s belief that the cultural studies
intellectual might be organic in the sense of bringing together an historic bloc of diverse
social groups (e.g. feminists, Marxists, queer theorists and activists), Bennett argues that such
a formulation fails to take into account the specific institutional constraints on cultural studies

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41 Bennett, *Culture: A Reformer’s Science* 6.
42 Bennett, *Culture: A Reformer’s Science* 6.
43 Bennett, *Culture: A Reformer’s Science* 30.
intellectuals as well as the fact that cultural studies scholars lack “the qualifications or capacities” required for such a task. Nevertheless, Bennett argues that the notion of the organic intellectual, albeit in a more limited form than Hall’s, can be useful for cultural studies in terms of attempting to connect “the forms of teaching and research conducted within academic institutions and the political agendas and constituencies that have been formed in relation to different fields of social conflict in society at large.”

v. The Professionalised Intellectual

In making a plea for a pragmatic approach to intellectual practice within cultural studies, one in which it might be possible to stage a dialogue with bureaucratic state structures, Bennett recognises however that such a suggestion is anathema to American critics like Jameson (who argued in his review of the 1990 Illinois cultural studies conference that Bennett’s policy-oriented critique had little relevance outside of the limited framework of Australian cultural politics). While Bennett suggests that Jameson’s strong critical reaction to a pragmatic, policy-oriented model of intellectualism can be explained in part by his being caught up in the “legacy of Romantic aesthetics” with its tendency to separate culture from “the mundane concerns of the practical affairs of government,” he also notes that Jameson’s response can be seen as the product of a distinctive American intellectual culture, a culture “where both the sheer size of the educational sector and the significant role of private institutions within that sector provide the kind of institutional conditions which allow critical debate to circulate in a semi-autonomous realm which might seem removed from those of government and administration.”

Accordingly, American intellectuals, unlike their Australian counterparts who have historically experienced a closer relationship with the state, tend to be especially resistant to the kinds of governmentalised models of intellectualism proposed by theorists like Bennett and O’Carroll. Despite the highly professionalised nature of intellectual work and the fact that the impact of “theory” and the new social movements has to a certain extent politicised
the activities of intellectuals, US intellectual culture tends to be dominated by nostalgic images of intellectualism premised upon independence, disinterested critique and adversarialism. US intellectuals are especially anxious about questions of institutionalism and professionalism, a concern that has seen the emergence over the past decade of a series of jeremiads lamenting the increasing academicisation of American intellectual culture.

While this anxiety about the intersecting processes of institutionalisation, professionalisation and academicisation is particularly intense in the US, I would argue that these concerns are also prevalent within the international intellectual community. Cultural studies, for instance, despite its purported openness to issues relating to the politicised nature of intellectual work, has been especially preoccupied with the “problem” of institutionalisation, an anxiety that has grown as the field has found itself becoming an increasingly accepted part of the academic landscape. In this section, I will briefly discuss the specifically American response to these issues as a means of shedding some light on the problematic assumptions underpinning cultural studies’ fear of academic professionalisation. In particular, I want to suggest the relevance of Bruce Robbins’ important reappraisal of the discourse of professionalism to a more complex understanding of the social location and role of the cultural studies intellectual.

A useful summary of the concerns about professionalism circulating within US intellectual culture is provided by Daniel Bell’s widely cited article, “The Cultural Wars: American Intellectual Life, 1965-1992.” In this article Bell traces the decline of American intellectual life, a decline he clearly links to the expansion of the university over the past three to four decades. He begins his argument by constructing a powerful picture of the “authentic intellectual,” a once integral modern subject who he claims has all but vanished from contemporary American cultural life. In his depiction of the intellectual, Bell draws heavily on Karl Mannheim’s influential conception of the “true” intellectual, outlined in his seminal 1920s work *Ideology and Utopia*, as an essentially free-floating and politically detached figure.

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After Mannheim, Bell asserts that the central defining feature that sets the modern thinker apart from “the masses” is the desire for intellectual autonomy. For Mannheim, an essential condition enabling the emergence of the modern free thinker was “freedom from the patronage system—of church, government, and wealthy individuals—and its replacement by the market, so that writers would be free to chance their own thoughts and fortunes.”\(^5\) Bell points out, however, that in contemporary society a considerable amount of intellectual activity now occurs within the auspices of universities or in other state-based institutions. In such a setting, Bell complains, “intellectual inquiry” no longer has a place but instead has been superseded by “research’, ‘policy analysis,’ and, ‘theory.’”\(^5\) Furthermore, he argues that the institutionalisation of intellectual life has led, via the processes of specialisation and professionalisation, to an increasingly narrow intellectual focus with little attention to the kind of broad “common” audience that intellectuals once professed to address. Indeed he contends that “if by intellectuals one means those socially unattached individuals devoted solely to the search for truth,”\(^5\) then, the contemporary university-based intellectual is not in fact an intellectual at all.

One figure who has challenged the prevailing conceptions of intellectualism in the US, as typified by Bell’s argument, is the literary and cultural theorist Bruce Robbins. Addressing the beliefs underpinning “American common sense”\(^5\) in relation to the issues of intellectuals, professionalism and culture, Robbins comments on the overwhelming nostalgia that underpins accounts such as Bell’s in which the figure of the intellectual is depicted as “a self-supporting, proudly independent artisan [who has now become] another casualty of the relentless, tragic process of capitalist modernization.”\(^5\) As a counterpoint to such romanticised accounts of the intellectual, Robbins’ writings reveal the deep inconsistencies underpinning these types of narratives. Arguing that the figure of the socially detached intellectual has little foundation in historical reality, he shows that whether intellectuals operate as freelance writers within the realm of the free market or as academic professionals they are always located within some kind of social space and are therefore subject to broader social and political forces. By placing into question the “free-floating” status of emblematic historical figures like the New York intellectuals, for instance, he not only problematises

\(^{51}\) Bell 75-76.
\(^{52}\) Bell 74.
\(^{53}\) Bell 74.
nostalgic representations of the intellectual, he also sets out to rethink the critical role of the contemporary, academicised intellectual.

In *Secular Vocations* (1993), Robbins’ inquiry into the conditions of contemporary intellectual practices involves a critical revalorisation of professionalism, one of the key processes identified by critics on the left and right of the political spectrum as having brought about the decline of the independent intellectual. Central to Robbins’ argument is that contemporary critics need to critically engage with, rather than merely dismiss outright, the model of the professionalised intellectual. Such a critical engagement, however, involves challenging certain fundamental assumptions, in particular the notion that professionals as “credentialed carriers of institutionally defined expertise who sell their commodity on the market, academic or otherwise...are thus constitutionally incapable of carrying on the intellectuals’ public, independent critical functions.”

Robbins argues that underpinning this limited conception of the professional are a series of binarised and reductive oppositions. Accordingly he attempts to open up the terms of the debate over the status of the contemporary intellectual by problematising the oppositions set up between the “intellectual and professional, oppositionality and expertise, public and private, in order to ask whether critical consciousness and social institutions are ever indeed so neatly opposed to one another.” Arguing that there is in fact “no place where thought can be free of all material encumbrance and social entanglement,” he suggests that one useful way of thinking through intellectual work as a socially grounded set of practices is to imagine intellectuals as professionals. Thus, Robbins’ reconceptualisation of professionalism works to recuperate a critical materialist model of intellectualism where issues of class and institutional location and the notion of intellectual practice as *work* come to the fore. Furthermore, rather than viewing critical practices as external to social processes, his structural analysis suggests that the culture of criticality upheld by intellectuals is produced through, and in relation to, the social institutions in which intellectuals are grounded. For example, Robbins’ response to the argument that socially grounded intellectuals lack a “transcendent foundation” for their claims to critical authority and are forced to rely instead

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56 Robbins, *Secular Vocations* ix-x.
57 Robbins, *Secular Vocations* x.
on a discourse of relativism foregrounds some of the productive possibilities of the model of professionalism. In particular, he argues that “far from institutionalising relativism, professional scholars have been in the business of fashioning and refashioning standards, norms, values. As of course they have been in the business of producing individuals who hold ethical, epistemological, aesthetic, and political beliefs, and whose attachment to their work is inextricable from those beliefs—in short, who have a sense of vocation.”

Robbins’ argument that the intellectual can be both institutionally located and critical at the same time bring us back to Hall’s ideal of the intellectual class as a social group with politically progressive potential. For example, while Frow has argued that there is a tendency within the intellectual class not to acknowledge its own social location, he also acknowledges the fact, after Gouldner, that the inherently ambivalent social position of intellectuals does open up a potential space for critical discourse. More specifically, what Robbins’ reassessment of the role of intellectual professionalisation does is remind us of the mediatory, and therefore potentially critical, role that institutional structures like universities and other sites of cultural production can perform in contemporary culture. While these sites form part of the institutional infrastructure of hegemonic culture, they also provide a base from which the reflexive cultural studies intellectual can launch a critique on that culture. Frow provides a useful summary of the complex social location of the cultural studies intellectual:

The question of our relation to regimes of value is not a personal but an institutional question. A key condition of any institutional politics, however, is that intellectuals do not denigrate their own status as possessors of cultural capital; that they accept and struggle with the contradictions that this entails; and that their cultural politics, right across the spectrum of cultural texts, should be openly and without embarrassment presented as their politics, not someone else’s.

vi. Contexts and Conjunctures: Specifying Cultural Studies

59 Robbins, Secular Vocations 23.
60 See his complex argument regarding both Gouldner and Bourdieu’s comments on the political potential of the knowledge class in Cultural Studies and Cultural Value 165-169.
61 Frow 169.
As we have seen, Frow’s class-based account, Bennett’s Foucauldian critique, and Robbins’ thesis on intellectuals and professionalism all offer useful models for locating the intellectual as a social subject. In particular, these models problematise the kinds of representational claims made by cultural studies practitioners in the name of the organic intellectual. However, one of the problems associated with such broad-based modes of critique is that they are rather totalising and therefore tend to exclude the possibility of other explanatory accounts. It is difficult to see, for instance, how Bennett’s argument about the governmental role of intellectuals could easily accommodate an understanding of the critical diasporic practices of postcolonial intellectuals like Stuart Hall and Homi Bhabha. In contrast, Frow’s account self-consciously works to avoid the problem of totalisation by representing class analysis as only one among many critical approaches to the intellectual. Thus, while most class-based accounts tend to reduce other analytic categories such as race and gender to the status of economic epiphenomena, Frow departs from such a monocausal approach. Instead, for Frow, class theory offers, like all theories of the social, a partial perspective that enables critics to look at a particular aspect of social functioning. Thus, it necessitates rather than excludes other theoretical models of social identity based upon race, gender etc.\(^62\)

However, despite Frow’s reflexivity regarding the dangers of a totalising theoretical approach, his analysis nevertheless reproduces a problem that often accompanies the use of more generalist, sociological approaches to the intellectual. In particular, in seeking broad connections between intellectuals as a social group, such theories often have difficulty accounting for and representing local differences whether at an institutional, cultural or national level. That is, while these theories may offer powerful tools for conceptualising cultural studies intellectuals in global terms they tend to do so at the expense of more specific forms of analysis grounded in local sites. In Frow’s analysis, this erasure of specificity is marked by the fact that his discussion of cultural studies intellectuals and their relation to cultural capital barely touches upon questions concerning the different forms that cultural value might take in different contexts. Thus, for example, readers would probably for the most part be unaware that Frow wrote the book within the setting of the Australian academy, emerging as it does out of a transnational academic space seemingly unmarked by the local. In contrast, while Robbins’ conception of the professionalised intellectual is generalised across cultural sites, unlike Frow’s more abstract theoretical analysis Robbins’ account is

\(^62\) Frow 98.
based upon “readings” that are thoroughly located within the specific social and cultural contexts under examination.

Another common (and related) problem with such generalist representations of intellectual practices is the tendency to universalise one’s own specific experiences. For instance, while Bennett’s argument concerning the need for intellectuals to be more policy oriented is not necessarily totally irrelevant to the American context, as Jameson has suggested, his claims need to be understood in light of the relatively governmentalised nature of the Australian academy rather than being generalised in a way that disguises the origins and self-interestedness of such claims. The problem of universalism is especially acute in the case of the more globally hegemonic work of British and US cultural studies theorists where a lack of awareness of other cultural studies sites and approaches can often unwittingly lead to an assumption that one’s own experience is that of the whole international cultural studies community. Of course the paradoxical outcome of this kind of cultural hegemony is that a theorist like Robbins can safely “specify” the largely Anglo-American focus of his analysis while scholars like Frow and Bennett, hoping to receive recognition within that hegemonic publishing community, are for the most part discouraged from specifying the Australian-oriented nature of their own work.

One of the central arguments in this thesis is that cultural studies has emerged out of, and in response to, specific cultural, political and historical conjunctures, represented in particular by me through the intellectual biographies of specific cultural studies practitioners. In order to comprehend the kinds of intellectual practices that constitute the field of cultural studies and to combat the problems of universalism described above, I have sought to develop a model of intellectualism based upon a particularist or conjunctural approach. As Blundell et al. argue, “[i]n so much as the work of cultural studies should be grounded in specific cultural and political moments, so too should critical reflection on cultural studies itself.”63 It follows that the anti-universalist ethos of cultural studies itself would seem to problematise an approach to cultural studies that draws upon totalising or deterministic models and would suggest instead the importance of emphasising a politics of specificity.

63 Blundell, Shepherd and Taylor 6.
However, as Robbins has pointed out, the rhetoric of the “authentically particular”\textsuperscript{64} that often accompanies anti-generalist approaches is not without its own problems. As he argues, the notion that a critical model can be purely grounded in the local “simply conceals the exemplification, representation, and generalization”\textsuperscript{65} that underpins all intellectual work. Taking into account Robbins’ critique, I acknowledge that rather than being anti-generalist, my focus on specificity in this thesis is in itself a kind of generalist account of the connections between cultural studies formations around the world. Furthermore, I recognise that questions of location or belonging are themselves frequently problematic, especially when they are framed within an authorising discourse of authenticity; for example, a cultural studies practitioner working in an English department in Melbourne is “located” at a complex global-regional-national-local nexus that is always shifting and contingent. Thus, I am not arguing that broad connections can not be made between cultural studies practices in different cultural and national sites. Instead, I am suggesting that generalised accounts of cultural studies and its intellectual practices need to be sensitive to the fact that the international community consists, as R. Radhakrishnan has argued, of “multiple worlds subtended unequally and asymmetrically within a more inclusive coeval history.”\textsuperscript{66}

The kind of generalist theory of specificity that I have adopted in this thesis is best encapsulated by the notion of “articulation,” a theory and/or methodology which has largely been developed within the field of cultural studies itself. Articulation is a term associated with the work of Stuart Hall and Ernesto Laclau (via Althusser and Gramsci), and as such carries with it a specifically Marxist heritage. However, what distinguishes the concept of articulation from other Marxist historical or social accounts is the fact that it breaks with a deterministic model of historical materialism. That is, while articulation theorists look for possible connections, for example, between material conditions and ideological production they refuse to reduce such linkages to a relationship of determination. Thus, while articulation theory looks for “the form of connection that \textit{can} make a unity of two different elements, under certain conditions,” as Hall points out, “the so-called ‘unity’ of a discourse is

\textsuperscript{64} Robbins, \textit{Secular Vocations} 185.
\textsuperscript{65} Robbins, \textit{Secular Vocations} 185.
\textsuperscript{66} R. Radhakrishnan, \textit{Diasporic Mediations: Between Home and Location} (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996) 30.
really the articulation of different, distinct elements which can be rearticulated in different ways because they have no necessary ‘belongingness’.”

One of the main aspects of articulation theory that I draw upon in this thesis is its utility as a theory of contexts. As Lawrence Grossberg explains, articulation “dictates that one can only deal with, and from within, specific contexts, for it is only there that practices have specific effects, that identities and relations exist. Understanding a practice involves theoretically and historically (re)-constructing the context.” The term context as it is used here, however, is not meant to imply some pre-existent, empirical background against which social and cultural practices are superstructurally played out, but rather the assumption is that practices and contexts are complexly interwoven and mutually constitutive processes. Accordingly, the specific intellectual biographies that I construct in this thesis around the figures of Hall, Morris, Grossberg and Ross involve fashioning a series of articulations between cultural and intellectual identity, historical context and political practice, social formations and theoretical concerns. However, the specific “unities” I have sought to map out between elements like cultural/national identity and cultural studies practices are, as Hall’s notion of articulation suggests, moments of connection which have no necessary “belongingness.” In relation to the figure of the cultural studies intellectual such an approach enables a discussion of the way in which intellectual practices are structured by various institutional, cultural and social fields while also recognising that the intellectual’s relationship to such fields is a contingent and contested one.

II. CULTURAL CONTEXTS: THE ROLE OF NATIONALISM AND DIASPORA IN CULTURAL STUDIES

i. The Trans-national Intellectual

While my discussion of cultural studies and its intellectual practices in this thesis attempts to variously position these practices in relation to the kinds of institutional, governmental and professional sites and discourses mentioned above, one of the major contexts in which I also attempt to locate the intellectuals under discussion is that of the national. As I have already

68 Lawrence Grossberg, We Gotta Get Out of This Place: Popular Conservatism and Postmodern Culture (New York: Routledge, 1992) 55.
outlined, the body of the thesis consists of three main sections respectively titled British, Australian and American cultural studies. The four intellectuals on whom I have chosen to focus, then, are discussed in relation to the national setting in which they have, for the most part, been located during their intellectual careers. I realise, however, that this kind of organisational structure may seem somewhat arbitrary especially given the globalised nature of the intellectuals under discussion. For example, Ross is American-based but was born in Scotland; Hall is a British-based Jamaican born intellectual; Morris, while a well-known Australian intellectual, is perhaps even better known in the US where she has taught and researched for much of the 1980s; and finally, Grossberg’s contribution to cultural studies is paradoxically more often recognised outside of the US intellectual culture in which he works. Indeed, I think that cultural studies as a field is especially marked by a pattern of intense transmigration among its practitioners, the traffic between the Australian and British cultural studies communities being a case in point. Nevertheless, I would argue that the intellectual careers of these four cultural studies practitioners have been shaped in fundamental ways by their national location and that their intellectual biographies, in turn, offer insights into the particularities of the national cultural studies formations with which their work has become associated.

At the same time, however, I understand “the nation” to be a complex socio-cultural construct whose boundaries are being increasingly challenged by the transnationalising and globalising processes that have characterised late contemporary culture. Like Fredric Jameson, I agree that cultural studies needs to move towards what he terms a “geographic reflexivity or geopolitical self-consciousness.” Furthermore, I recognise that increasingly within cultural studies there has been a shift away from conceptualising culture in national terms. The work of the black, British intellectual Paul Gilroy exemplifies the counter-nationalist logic underpinning much of the new cultural studies writing. For example, in his critically acclaimed book *The Black Atlantic* (1993), Gilroy makes a radical break with “the dogmatic focus on discrete national dynamics which has characterised so much modern

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69 A number of Australia’s cultural studies theorists, including John Fiske (who is now based in the US), John Hartley, Tony Bennett and John Tulloch, moved here from Britain in the 70s and 80s no doubt in response to the pressures on the academic left that accompanied the rise of Thatcherism. Interestingly, now that Labour have returned to office in the UK and the Australian academy is increasingly under pressure from a Liberal government, a number of these figures, including Bennett, have returned to the UK.

70 Jameson 71.
Euro-American cultural thought” by utilising a diasporic or trans-national model of culture to understand the formation of what he characterises as a distinctly trans-Atlantic black consciousness. As I discuss later, the emergence of diasporic analyses such as Gilroy’s has also been accompanied by an increasing shift within cultural theory towards globalised or cosmopolitan accounts of culture.

While my thesis is structurally organised around the category of the national, my analysis of the role of the national in the intellectual history of cultural studies does not simply ignore the recent shift away from nationally-based cultural analysis to diasporic approaches. Instead, I have attempted to maintain a productive and dynamic tension throughout my thesis between a national taxonomy of cultural studies and alternative cultural studies narratives organised around more cosmopolitan or globalised conceptions of culture. For instance, in two of the sections of the thesis I attempt to break down the opposition between the local/national and the global by foregrounding the intersections between these cultural categories. Thus in my analysis of Stuart Hall, I frame both my discussion of his intellectual biography and my account of the development of British cultural studies through a diasporic conception of culture while my discussion of Meaghan Morris and Australian cultural studies is organised around the trope of the local cosmopolitan. Accordingly, while the organisational framework privileged in this thesis is that of the national, the conception of the nation-state underpinning my analysis is not the essentialist, static formation criticised by figures like Gilroy but rather, following Jameson, I see the national as “a relational term for the component parts of the world system.”

ii. Re-mapping Cultural Studies

Before I go on to my opening discussion of Hall and British cultural studies it is necessary, however, to provide one final contextualisation of my thesis with respect to the broader debates over the origins and developmental history of cultural studies and, in particular, to explain why I have chosen to focus my own inter-national comparative study of cultural studies primarily on Britain, Australia and America.

72 Jameson 71.
Until relatively recently, cultural studies “readers,” such as Simon During’s influential volume published in 1993, have presented the history of cultural studies as emerging predominantly out of Britain in the fifties. Thus, while During’s book gives the occasional nod to US and Australian cultural studies formations and describes cultural studies today as “a transnational academic discipline,”\(^73\) the origins of that transnational discipline are unquestionably British. As I suggested earlier in this discussion, however, a number of cultural studies theorists have more recently challenged this particular narrativisation of cultural studies’ past, suggesting instead the need for a plurality of narratives in which the CCCS at Birmingham is decentred rather than privileged as the originary moment of cultural studies. Contributing to this challenge to the hegemony of British-centred conceptions of cultural studies has been the recent publication of a large number of articles and books locating cultural studies in other national and regional sites such as Canada, New Zealand, Africa, Asia and Scandinavia.\(^74\)

In an article published in 1998, for example, Handel K. Wright attempts to problematise “the construction and perpetuation of the myth of a singular, definitive, and academic origin of cultural studies”\(^75\) by offering up a number of sites other than Birmingham as the possible originary source of cultural studies. In the tongue-in-cheek statement that opens the article, he points out that “[i]t is a little known fact that cultural studies proper started in Africa in the 1970s,”\(^76\) before going on to identify other sites, such as Myles Horton’s Highlander school in the US with its “focus on education for social justice and community empowerment,”\(^77\) as

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\(^76\) Wright 33.

\(^77\) Wright 43.
possible places where cultural studies might have first emerged. In the process of constructing these alternative genealogies of cultural studies, Wright demonstrates the shortfalls of a uni-centred mapping of cultural studies’ developmental formation arguing instead that cultural studies “needs multiple discourses of its origins and histories.”

By locating my discussion of cultural studies practices in three different national sites, my thesis is self-consciously situated within these broader debates over the need for a more decentred and pluralised account of cultural studies’ developmental history. Certainly, like Wright, I am critical of the implication underpinning British-centred narratives that “wherever cultural studies is to be found in the world today, it migrated there from Birmingham.” Accordingly, my analysis of Australian and American cultural studies puts forwards a series of alternative genealogies for cultural studies that are seen to emerge out of the specific intellectual, socio-cultural and political contexts of the nations under discussion rather than simply being imported from Britain. Furthermore, by offering up British, Australian and American cultural studies as nationally distinct formations, my thesis confirms Grossberg, Treichler and Nelson’s argument that “several viable national cultural studies traditions now co-exist [and that] cultural studies will...proceed within these national traditions in partial autonomy.” However, while Wright tends to include US and Australian cultural studies within the same Anglocentric hegemonic moment that marks the privileging of British cultural studies, I argue to the contrary that a focus on these other sites (especially that of Australia) does present a challenge to a British-centred narrative. In constructing developmental narratives for cultural studies based in three different national sites my thesis offers up a comparative rather than a uni-centred account.

What this approach attempts to do, then, is to both relativise and specify those cultural studies formations that have tended to become hegemonic. As the Australian cultural and media theorist Graeme Turner notes, “British and American cultural studies traditions in particular are marked by the ease with [which] they speak from a context that effortlessly rather than deliberately universalises itself.” Accordingly, what is needed to counterbalance these universalistic tendencies is “a comparative tradition which explicitly

78 Wright 48–49.
79 Wright 43.
and routinely admits the contingency of its local analyses and arguments. My inclusion of Australian cultural studies in this thesis is especially crucial here. This particular formation has had an influence on the international cultural studies scene that has been somewhat out of proportion with the small size and relative marginality of Australian intellectual culture in relation to the broader Anglophone academic community. In fact, it is fair to say that American cultural studies figures like Grossberg are as much indebted to Australian cultural theory as they are to British and US influences. Nevertheless, I would argue, against Wright, that Australian cultural studies has on the whole tended to disturb rather than shore up the construction of an Anglocentric hegemonic cultural studies. In particular, as I propose in my analysis of Meaghan Morris and in my concluding chapter, Australian cultural studies is marked by its national identity in a way that tends to continually problematise the universalist tendencies that inevitably underpin British and US cultural studies work. This is not to deny that there have been moments when Australian cultural studies has been incorporated into the dominant Anglo-American formation; the take over of the *Australian Journal of Cultural Studies* by Methuen (now Routledge) and its conversion into the now primarily US based journal *Cultural Studies* being a significant case in point. However, for the most part, I would argue that the “Australianness” of Australian cultural studies works to confound attempts to move towards a culturally non-specific, “globalised” representation of cultural studies.

My focus on Australia as a comparative counterpoint to Britain and the US thus offers a more ec-centric perspective on the development of cultural studies than those accounts that continue to use British cultural studies as the source of, and blueprint for, the internationalisation of cultural studies. Nevertheless, while I support critical approaches such as Wright’s that attempt to disrupt the mythologising tendencies around British cultural studies and that in turn place into question the increasing Anglo-American hegemony within international cultural studies, I think that such relativising strategies hold some dangers for a cultural studies concerned with addressing issues of structural and institutional power and with contextualising its own practices.

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For example, Wright’s article—by arguing that rather than being primarily university based “[c]ultural studies happens heuristically in the streets, in the theatre, on the dance floor and even in cyberspace”\(^\text{83}\)—attempts to reclaim cultural studies as a set of everyday, performative acts thereby questioning the legitimacy of cultural studies’ institutional moment at Birmingham as the defining moment for cultural studies. While this argument is driven by an arguably laudable desire to re-imagine a cultural studies project beyond the bounds of the academy, as my previous discussion of the structural constraints on intellectuals suggests, a cultural studies genealogy premised upon the kind of voluntarist model of intellectual practice suggested by Wright’s notion of performativity may paradoxically work to cover over, rather than problematise, the questions of disciplinarity and institutionality that inhere in cultural studies as an intellectual formation. Wright’s own call for a shift away from an Anglo-American centred cultural studies and his desire to legitimate alternative sites such as that of an African cultural studies becomes somewhat problematic when we consider that Wright is himself an American-based academic (he teaches cultural studies at the University of Tennessee) while his call for the legitimation of African cultural studies is being voiced in the European Journal of Cultural Studies. While Wright’s academic location and the nature of his audience do not necessarily detract from Wright’s own performative critique of the Anglo-American academy, they do draw attention to the need for cultural studies to continually remind itself of the structural “realities” underpinning its recent “internationalisation.”

Accordingly, while offering up a set of competing genealogical narratives or ways of imagining cultural studies and its intellectuals practices, my thesis is also strongly materialist in the sense that each genealogy is situated within a broader socio-cultural context; the largely academic location of cultural studies, then, is viewed in this thesis as an accepted material condition of cultural studies rather than, as in many discussions on the formation of the field, a point of disavowal. Furthermore, while I acknowledge the problems involved with Anglo-centric accounts of cultural studies this thesis nevertheless begins with a discussion of British cultural studies. My decision to include Britain in this comparative analysis is a simple acknowledgment of the fact that the term cultural studies was first coined and institutionalised at the CCCS at the University of Birmingham. And while I argue that those formations that have recently taken the name of cultural studies in various sites in the

\(^{83}\) Wright 44.
US and Australia have their own often unique origins and trajectories, the inter-national focus of my thesis involves a recognition that something called “British cultural studies” has, via its publications and its figureheads, had a powerful influence on the development of cultural theory in other national settings.

However, rather than revisiting the now familiar narrative where the origins of cultural studies are first located within Leavisite criticism in the fifties and in the pivotal work of the two “scholarship boys,” Richard Hoggart and Raymond Williams, my discussion of British cultural studies is primarily organised around the figure of Stuart Hall. My focus on the biography of Hall (and in particular on race, diaspora and cultural identity) and the intersections between his own cultural and political concerns and the broader socio-political landscape of Britain from the late 50s to the 90s provides a deliberate counterpoint to primarily class-centred conceptions of British cultural studies. Furthermore, through characterising Hall as a hybridised, diasporic intellectual, I attempt to challenge the unified, essentialist conception of Englishness that has tended to underpin much British cultural studies work. By recontextualising the British cultural studies formation within a more culturally permeable and relational conception of nationality, the first part of the thesis thus sets the tone for a discussion that focuses as much on the transnational flows between nations and the migratory patterns of intellectuals as it does on the difference between national cultural studies formations.
PART ONE
STUART HALL AND THE FORMATION OF BRITISH CULTURAL STUDIES: A DIASPORIC NARRATIVE

Introduction

While within Britain Stuart Hall is perhaps best known as a leading leftist political analyst, elsewhere it is Hall’s work in cultural studies and his connection with Birmingham University’s Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (of which Hall was the director from 1968 to 1979) that has recently become the focus of academic attention. In the US in particular, academics have begun to foreground Hall’s central role in the formation of a critical, leftist, cultural studies tradition with practitioners like Lawrence Grossberg going so far as to claim that Hall’s work has been “crucially responsible for the definition and institutionalisation of ‘cultural studies’.”

Hall himself, however, has sought to counter his growing status as a “founding father” of cultural studies. In a paper titled “Cultural Studies and its Theoretical Legacies” (delivered at the conference “Cultural Studies Now and in the Future” held in Illinois in 1990), and which I referred to in my previous chapter, Hall remarks sardonically “I sometimes feel like a tableau vivant, a spirit of the past resurrected, laying claim to the authority of an origin. After all, didn’t cultural studies emerge somewhere at that moment when I first met Raymond Williams, or in the glance I exchanged with Richard Hoggart?”

Similarly, in a recent interview with Kuan-Hsing Chen, Hall again voiced concerns about attempts to characterise him as the cultural studies representative arguing instead that that no one person can represent the diverse processes that contributed to the (ongoing) cultural studies project. The reification of certain individuals as the sole architects of particular intellectual traditions or trajectories thus seems to reflect, for Hall, a rather problematic approach to the history of thought. In contrast to this focus on individuals themselves, Hall describes the formation and ongoing development of cultural studies “as a process which passes through us...[o]f course that doesn’t mean that we are just ciphers...[w]e transmit

[earlier theoretical traditions] in a certain way, differently from how it would be transmitted if somebody else did it [however] the process...has always been more heterogeneous, more diverse, than it could ever be in the keeping of any one single person.”

In this part of my thesis, I examine the complex relationship, then, between Stuart Hall and the emergence of British cultural studies, a field whose “theoretical history closely parallels” that of Hall’s. However, like Hall I am sceptical of those analyses that merely focus on cultural studies as the product of the insights of certain exceptional intellectuals (or what Bill Schwartz scathingly refers to as the “trinity of founding fathers,” namely Hoggart, Williams and Thompson) without providing some sense of the way in which those insights emerge out of, and articulate with, a broader sociocultural milieu. As Schwartz has pointed out, many of the histories of cultural studies have represented overly textually-based treatises that show little concern for historical detail but instead offer a “myth of origins which eases the journey of cultural studies into the academy.”

As I noted in my introductory chapter, however, I am interested in analysing exemplary figures like Hall using a theory of articulation. Thus, rather than merely privileging Hall as an exceptional individual (one of the “founding fathers”) through whom cultural studies emerged as a major player in British political and intellectual circles, I am interested in pursuing a cultural studies approach to intellectual practices that examines the ways in which Hall’s biography both constituted and emerged out of certain pivotal contexts which I will argue played a major role in the formation of cultural studies. However, in re-constructing and foregrounding the contexts out of which Hall emerged as an intellectual force in British cultural studies, I also work to bridge the gap between individual agency and historical context. As Jennifer Daryl Slack explains in her article on articulation, what a cultural studies analysis does is “map the context—not in the sense of situating a phenomenon in a

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89 Schwartz 381. Lawrence Grossberg also touches upon some of these issues in his critique of the tendency to narrativise the history of British cultural studies in an excessively linear and progressivist way. It seems that these kinds of coherent narratives assist in the canonisation of cultural studies at the expense of more heterogeneous accounts of the formation of cultural studies which might attempt “to account for the continuing challenge, from within the history of the formation, of competing definitions of the project of cultural studies.”
context, but in mapping a context, mapping the very identity that brings the context into focus." Thus, I want to think of Hall as himself constituting a kind of context so that an analysis of his intellectual practices and politics can be seen as offering certain insights into some of the broader questions raised by British cultural studies.

As previously discussed, there has been considerable debate recently over the tendency within international cultural studies to privilege British cultural studies as the originary cultural studies formation. Furthermore, as Handel K. Wright points out, the majority of accounts of the origins and formation of British cultural studies tend to reinforce a mythologised and monolithic interpretation of its historical development. Jon Stratton and Ien Ang have also been highly critical of the tendency within British cultural studies to construct its own “myth of origin,” a myth which they argue operates “within the (white) Great Man (sic) theory of (colonial, patriarchal) history.” What concerns them is the way in which the myths constructed around British cultural studies tend to be positioned within a primarily *intra*-national framework whereby the development of cultural studies is portrayed as being untouched by external forces. Such a parochial conception of the formation of British cultural studies therefore makes it difficult to understand why British cultural studies has been so readily embraced internationally.

In contrast, Stratton and Ang argue that instead of seeing cultural studies as a primarily British formation which was subsequently exported to other national sites “it might be better to speak about a geographically dispersed plurality of intellectual trajectories and movements, largely in the post-1960s period and in western, English-speaking countries, which, under precise historical conditions which need to be further explored, converged into the aforementioned international *rendez-vous*.“ While my thesis attempts to move towards the kind of internationalist framing of cultural studies put forward by Stratton and Ang through mapping out at various sites these “precise historical conditions,” more specifically what I am interested in at this juncture in my thesis is their argument that the history of

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91 Wright, 37.
British cultural studies itself might be usefully recast in terms of issues of race and cultural identity.

In particular, I want to take up their suggestion that a figure within British cultural studies, namely the Jamaican-born, British-based intellectual Stuart Hall, might provide a useful way to critique the very myths of origin in which he often plays a starring role. As they note, Hall’s unique position in cultural studies as an intellectual who has had to continually juggle his blackness, his Britishness and his iconic status within cultural studies provides a useful point from which to launch into a revisionist account of British cultural studies. In particular, they suggest that “Hall’s understanding of his own intellectual and personal biography [as] informed by a speaking position which we want to characterize as diasporic”94 offers an inroad into a critique of traditional conceptions of the formation of British cultural studies. Using a diasporic model, then, it is possible to talk about the specific development of British cultural studies in a way that avoids both essentialising and universalising its Britishness and that suggests a more pluralist approach to questions about its origins and formation. Thus, for instance, my discussion of British cultural studies via the biography of Stuart Hall offers a more complex, trans-national account of the influences on and origins of British cultural studies than conventional intra-national approaches. In particular, by conceptualising Hall (after Stratton and Ang) as a diasporic or postcolonial intellectual, I attempt to question essentialist constructions of British culture and identity and to represent Britishness instead as a pluralised and contested cultural site.

In offering up a diasporic perspective, however, I am not attempting to displace those accounts of British cultural studies that emphasise the influential role of working class culture and New Left politics; rather I am concerned here with recontextualising those issues in the light of the kind of postcolonial analysis suggested by Hall’s mode of intellectual practice. Thus, rather than offering a re-reading of British cultural studies in which race rather than class (or gender) is the privileged term of analysis I am interested in framing my discussion of the development of this field in relation to the broader issue of cultural identity in general. In particular, what this process involves is re-imagining British cultural studies as a site whose history has been marked by a series of contestations over the nature of subjectivity; debates that have seen cultural studies shift the focus of its concerns from class

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to gender to race and more recently to the more generic notion of cultural identity. However, rather than simply viewing this movement as a progressive one—that is, as a shift from “bad” models of identity and culture based upon class to the “good” models of “hybridised” identity offered today by, for instance, black British cultural studies theorists like Paul Gilroy—I am interested in the way that these differing approaches all deal with similar sets of concerns, concerns revolving in particular around questions of cultural change and the fragmentation of identity in contemporary society. In this context, Hall, a figure whose experiences of dramatic cultural transformation and personal dislocation have played a central role in his formation as an intellectual, offers a particularly useful lens through which to view the origins and development of cultural studies as an intellectual-political movement.

In discussing British cultural studies specifically in relation to Hall’s intellectual and political career I am not interested in reducing Hall or cultural studies to questions of race and culture. Rather, as I have suggested, identity here is conceived as a diasporic formation where subjectivity is seen as a site of contestation and disjuncture. Hall defines diaspora as the “the doubled relationship or dual loyalty that migrants, exiles, and refugees have to places—their connections to the space they currently occupy and their continuing involvement with ‘back home’.”95 I am interested in using the notion of diaspora as a trope that not only expresses the fragmented experience of the colonised, black subject but that also can be applied to questions of identity in general. In particular, taking my cue from Edward Said’s conception of exile and its relation to intellectual practice, I want to suggest that the diasporic experience is not only an “actual condition [but is also] for my purposes a metaphorical condition.”96

However, in foregrounding a diasporic model of identity I want also to problematise the notion that a simple and fixed equation can be made between one’s identity and one’s intellectual politics and suggest instead that such relations are often shifting and contradictory. In terms of thinking about what insights about British cultural studies might be gleaned from Hall’s biography, I would suggest that a focus on the tensions that mark a figure who was caught between often conflicting race, class and cultural identifications, and whose experiences of cultural displacement have paradoxically occurred within structures of

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96 Said 39.
relative privilege is more useful than constructing Hall as an internally coherent intellectual and political subject. As Hall himself has commented in relation to the question of cultural identity, “though we speak, so to say ‘in our own name’, of ourselves and from our own experience, nevertheless who speaks, and the subject who is spoken of, are never identical, never exactly in the same place.”97 It is this shifting space and place of cultural identity that I am interested in analysing here, a process which in Hall’s case is better understood via the notion of dis-placement rather than marginality. My argument in this chapter then is that this displaced or disjunctive imaginary plays a major role in the formation and development of British cultural studies itself.

In terms of the structure of this chapter, then, the first section offers some biographical insights into Hall’s complex and at times contradictory identity as a (post)colonial, British intellectual, focusing in particular on Hall’s early years in Jamaica up until and including the period in the early fifties when Hall moved to Britain to take up a scholarship at Oxford University. The second and lengthier part of my discussion deals more specifically with the socio-political context out of which cultural studies emerged as an intellectual formation; however, once again the issues raised in this discussion are framed through the specific intellectual biography of Stuart Hall. Thus this latter section focuses on Hall’s intellectual career in Britain commencing with his involvement in New Left politics at Oxford in the fifties, moving on to a discussion of his formative role in the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in the sixties and seventies, and ending with an analysis of his work during the Thatcher era in the eighties.

It is in the following discussion of Hall’s early experiences in Jamaica that I set the scene for a diasporic reading of the development of British cultural studies. Traditionally the narratives constructed around this formation take their origins from rural Wales and industrial Leeds, the birthplaces respectively of Raymond Williams and Richard Hoggart. The story of these “founding fathers” (and thus of cultural studies itself) tends to be located firmly on British soil and in particular within British working-class culture. In contrast, I want to suggest an alternative originary narrative, one that begins outside Britain in one of its

colonial outposts and that complicates the logic of class culture and marginality underpinning cultural studies’ founding myths.

Somewhat surprisingly, Hall himself is often situated unproblematically within the Hoggart/Williams cultural studies trajectory with many theorists locating him within a tradition of British cultural Marxism and New Left politics. Hall’s turn in his recent work to a more self-conscious focus on the relationship between his own black, diasporic identity and his intellectual politics, however, has raised questions not only about the validity of locating Hall within a purely class-based narrative of cultural studies but also the utility of some of these originary myths for British cultural studies as a whole. In particular, Hall’s re-contextualisation of his own complex intellectual biography within the “imagined community” of the black diaspora and his foregrounding of the importance of displacement as a critical political/intellectual trope has offered up the possibility of a radically different myth of origins for British cultural studies. What such a re-reading entails is a thorough re-orientation of the trajectory of cultural studies. In this next section, then, I want to discuss Hall’s Caribbean background and his experience of a displaced, colonial identity as a way of not only shifting the traditional originary location of British cultural studies but also of introducing a new critical vocabulary for understanding the development of this intellectual-political formation, one based around a fractured or doubled sense of identity and culture.

I. A POSTCOLONIAL PERSPECTIVE

i. Narratives of Selfhood

In “Minimal Selves,” an article that foregrounds the centrality of movement and displacement to contemporary experience, and in two recent interviews, one with Kuan-Hsing Chen and the other with Naoki Sakai, Hall describes his own experiences as a Jamaican who migrated to Britain in the fifties, emphasising in particular the formative role that these experiences played in moulding his sense of identity. The feelings of dislocation and fragmentation that Hall experienced as a new migrant contributed to a certain critical

distance from his own identity. As Hall notes, the experience of being permanently displaced from his place of origin and being forced to endlessly reconstruct himself through new narratives of identity resulted in his being “aware of the fact that identity is an invention from the very beginning, long before I understood any of this theoretically.”

The origins of this heightened sense of the constructed nature of identity can be traced even further back to Hall’s upbringing in Jamaica where he lived in an environment fraught with colonial and class tensions. Hall’s father, for example, worked for the United Fruit Company and was promoted to a managerial position previously held only by white employees. His father’s social status was further complicated by the fact that he came originally from a coloured, lower-middle class background while Hall’s lighter-skinned mother was raised in an educated middle-class milieu on a plantation and considered herself to be “practically ‘English’.”

As Hall notes, growing up “in a lower-middle-class family that was trying to be a middle-class Jamaican family trying to be an English Victorian family” taught him early on about issues of difference. His family’s identification with the culture of the colonisers (his mother spoke nostalgically of the old plantation era while his father joined sports clubs as a means of being accepted into the English expatriate business community), rather than Jamaican culture, and their obsession with racial and colour differences (Hall describes his outsider status as the blackest member of the family and recalls his parents refusal to allow him to mix with darker skinned schoolmates) meant that Hall experienced at a very personal level the contradictions of the culture of colonialism. He recalls actively distancing himself from his parents and their class and colonial aspirations. As a young student, for instance, when his parents were mourning the passing of the old colonial era, Hall identified strongly with the anti-imperialist goals of the then fledgling Jamaican independence movement. At the same time, however, he was excelling in a traditional English-oriented education system (where he learned Latin, English history, English literature etc.). While Hall read more broadly than the narrow classical education normally permitted (in his final year at school he studied Freud, Marx and Lenin), he acknowledges that he “was very much formed like a member of the


100 Hall, “Minimal Selves,” 135.


102 Hall, “Minimal Selves,” 135.
From an early age, then, Hall experienced the tensions of identifying with two very different cultural systems. While he gained increasing self-confidence from his academic achievements in the hegemonic, colonial education system, at the same time he continued to have an interest in, and ongoing identification with, the Caribbean nationalist movement (he remembers reading Marxist theory at that stage as a means of gaining some political understanding of the processes of colonialism).

While Hall names as powerful role models a handful of teachers at school who seemed able to negotiate between possessing a sense of Caribbean identity and being “academic and English-oriented,” his family environment offered no equivalent space in which Hall himself could fashion a similar kind of hybridised subjecthood. Recalling his family life and the reasons for his subsequent emigration to Britain in 1951, Hall captures the subjective effects of the impact of colonialism and its contradictions on the individual. He reflects that “[w]hen I look at the snapshots of my childhood and early adolescence, I see a picture of a depressed person. I don’t want to be who they want me to be, but I don’t know how to be somebody else.”

Ironically, this subjective experience of displacement from both his Jamaican identity and an English identification imposed on him via the Jamaican education system in many ways helped prepare Hall psychologically for his move to Britain. As he notes, his attempt to escape from the colonised “home” where he felt he never quite belonged took him, via a scholarship, to Oxford university, itself a central colonial institution and a place that his family ironically saw as their real cultural “home.” Not surprisingly, however, Oxford was a place where—as my discussion in the following section of this chapter examines—Hall felt doubly displaced.

ii. Cultural Displacement and Diasporic Identity

Hall’s reflections on these early experiences of the confused and contradictory identity of the colonial subject are not only useful for thinking through the ways in which such experiences impacted on his subsequent career as a leftist intellectual in Britain but, I would argue, also

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offer critical possibilities for thinking through the origins and formation of British cultural studies. In particular, the kind of model of identity that emerges out of a diasporic experience of subjectivity, that is a model organised around the trope of dislocation, is useful for disrupting coherent notions of Britishness and (class) culture. What it suggests instead is a broader notion of cultural identity and accordingly a more pluralised, dislocated conception of British cultural studies itself.

Such an approach to British cultural studies is particularly appropriate given that the kind of postcolonial experiences described by Hall were, in the fifties and sixties, also beginning to have an impact on the culture of the colonisers itself, with the mass movement of peoples from the Caribbean and from the Asian subcontinent to Britain representing in a concrete form Britain’s encounter with an increasingly globalised and diasporic form of culture. Thus, while Hall points out that when cultural studies began to emerge in the sixties “there was apparently no visible, urgent question of race in contemporary English culture at all,” at the same time he notes that the profound sociohistorical changes that marked the end of Britain’s colonial rule were dramatically transforming English culture. That is, while at a conscious level British society was still unable to recognise “[t]he ways in which the colonizing experience had, indeed, threaded itself through the imaginary of the whole culture,” according to Hall it nevertheless experienced a sense of dramatic cultural upheaval. It was this cultural revolution, then, that lead to the emergence of cultural studies, a field of knowledge concerned not with mapping the cultures of “others” but rather as Hall notes with turning its “inquiring, ethnographic gaze” on the English, a group who “had not yet learned to conceive of themselves as ‘the natives’.” Thus, cultural studies emerged at a time when the coherence of British culture was starting to be challenged by the loss of “its old imperial identity and role and the difficulty of discovering a new cultural and national identity.” Accordingly, any critical analysis of the formation and development of cultural studies clearly needs to be able to theorise questions of cultural identity in a way that can account for the kind of upheaval and dislocation that marked Britain’s shift into a postcolonial era.

107 Hall, “Race, Culture, and Communications,” 13.
108 Hall, “Race, Culture, and Communications,” 10.
As I have suggested, the turn within Hall’s more recent work towards a diasporic model of culture and cultural identity offers one such approach. If British cultural studies emerges out of, and responds to, the fact that British cultural identity is increasingly marked by shifting and contested boundaries, then what is particularly useful about a diasporic approach is its emphasis on identity as discursive and in-process. As Hall has counselled in a recent essay on diasporic identity

[p]erhaps instead of thinking about identity as an already accomplished fact, which the new cultural practices then represent, we should think, instead, of identity as a ‘production’ which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation. This view problematises the very authority and authenticity to which the term ‘cultural identity’ lays claim.110

As I have noted, the critical notion of cultural identity employed here by Hall intersects with, and emerges out of, a growing theoretical literature concerned with utilising the metaphors of migrancy and displacement in order to rethink political, intellectual and cultural practices. Variously theorised in terms of “border-crossing,” “nomadism,” “travelling theory/theorists,”111 as well as the term I am privileging here, “diaspora,” this “new” literature of cultural practice/politics offers a critique of traditional conceptions of a stable link between culture and identity and in particular problematises the binaries of centre/margin, home/abroad that often underpin fixed notions of identity.

However, the term diaspora in its original usage did not necessarily suggest the kind of deconstructionist approach to ethnicity associated with contemporary postcolonial theory112 and, as Ien Ang has pointed out, it continues to have links to the kind of ethnic absolutism associated with diasporic communities that cling to “the myth of the (lost or idealised)

109 Hall, “Race, Culture, and Communications,” 12.
112 As Paul Gilroy points out, the term originally came to be utilised by Jewish thinkers associated with the modern Zionist movement. For a further discussion of the links between the black and Jewish diaspora see Gilroy, The Black Atlantic 205-212.
homeland.” Nevertheless, as Ang notes, a creative revisioning of the diaspora as a site of hybridised rather than unified cultural forms where ethnicity “is experienced as a provisional and partial ‘identity’, which must be constantly (re)invented and (re)negotiated,” can play a constructive role in conveying the “flexible positioning” that marks contemporary cultural identity.

Writing in the late eighties about the culturally hybridised content of contemporary films being produced by young Black British filmmakers, Hall discusses just this kind of critically productive notion of diaspora. While acknowledging the strong role that cultural roots play for the black diaspora in Britain, he also notes that the relations between diasporic groups in Britain and their various cultural origins are far from straightforward. Hall points out that for these culturally hybridised subjects there can “be no simple ‘return’ or ‘recovery’ of the ancestral past which is not re-experienced through the categories of the present: no base for creative enunciation in a simple reproduction of traditional forms which are not transformed by the technologies and the identities of the present.” In particular, for Hall, returning “home” as a diasporic subject means coming to terms with the fact that one is “irrevocably the product of several interlocking histories and cultures, belong[ing] at one and the same time to several ‘homes’ (and to no one particular ‘home’).”

Hall’s discussion of the problematic nature of “home” for the diasporic subject who is continually in between cultures is integral to understanding the politics and practices of the diasporic intellectual, a figure that in turn underpins the postcolonially-inflected narrativisation of British cultural studies that follows. In this next section, then, I want to discuss some of the major developmental shifts in cultural studies, from its origins in the New Left to the recent emergence of black British cultural studies as a major “new” field. As previously noted, my main concern here is with using Hall’s diasporic intellectual to rethink the “origins” and development of cultural studies as well as the wider social and political landscape of Britain from the 1950s to the 1980s via the trope of cultural displacement.

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114 Ang 42.
II. STUART HALL AND THE FORMATION OF CULTURAL STUDIES

i. The Crisis of British Culture

As discussed in the previous section, Hall had, prior to leaving Jamaica, become increasingly interested in its emerging nationalist politics, and on arrival in Britain in 1951 he found himself mixing primarily with West Indian expatriates. Commentary on Hall’s time at Oxford tends to focus primarily on his involvement in socialist politics, a political commitment that, as I discuss shortly, saw Hall play a central role in the formation of the New Left. In a recent interview, however, Hall suggests a continuity between the seldom discussed postcolonial political culture at Oxford at that time and the concerns of the emerging New Left. In fact, the picture he himself paints of his first three years at Oxford is one of total “saturation” in postcolonial politics living as he did at that time in a milieu dominated by “first generation, black, anti-colonial or post-colonial intelligentsia,” many of whose graduate studies were funded by their governments and who subsequently returned to their countries “to become the leading cadre of the post-independence period.”

Hall’s entree into British leftist politics came when he received a second scholarship and decided to stay on at Oxford. It was at this time that he met various people (like Alan Hall, who later played a role in the New Left, and the philosopher Charles Taylor) who, while interested in Marxism, remained distanced from the Communist Party and the Labour Party. As an alternative to the conventional leftist political groups of the time, Hall and these other “independent” leftists formed the Socialist Society, a group that sought to bring together a variety of left thinkers (from postcolonial intellectuals to British Marxists) who were critical of both Stalinism and imperialism. Rather than representing a total break with his earlier postcolonial politics, however, I would argue that the leftist politics in which Hall became increasingly involved were imbued with the kind of diasporic concerns that marked Hall’s own ambivalent relationship with the more traditional institutions of British socialism. Of relevance here is the fact that Hall’s socialist group was largely made up of “foreigners or

118 Chen, “The formation of a Diasporic Intellectual,” 492.
internal immigrants: [while] a lot of the British people were provincial, working-class, or Scottish, or Irish, or Jewish."\textsuperscript{119} That is, the impetus for the early formation of the New Left along with the move to break away from the traditional structures of the Old Left came from a group of individuals who shared an experience of \textit{cultural displacement}.

This concern of Hall and others with challenging the bases of traditional leftist British politics came at a time when Britain was undergoing significant social upheaval. In particular, it occurred at a moment when British society itself was undergoing a kind of cultural identity crisis, a crisis which was provoked in part by external influences. As Ang and Stratton point out, “while it may be true that Britain provided a uniquely productive moment for a radical rethinking of ‘culture’ in the British context” this does not mean that British cultural studies emerged “solely out of organic, internal forces.”\textsuperscript{120} Rather, the context in which Britain underwent what Hall referred to in an article in 1958 as “a major shift in the patterns of social life in this country”\textsuperscript{121} was one marked by inter-national rather than purely intra-national forces. As Ang and Stratton argue, one of the major processes contributing to this social transformation was Britain’s declining role as a major colonial presence, a decline that occurred at the same time as America was emerging as “the new western global superpower.”\textsuperscript{122}

While Bryan S. Turner has argued that other commonwealth nations in the immediate post-war period were starting to grapple more openly than Britain with issues of race and multiculturalism,\textsuperscript{123} I would suggest that Britain’s decline as an imperial force, alongside the remapping of the world system with America at its centre and the increasing importation of American mass culture into Britain in the fifties did, however, witness a significant challenge to Britain’s monolithic and exclusionary national identity. Indeed, Stratton and Ang suggest that “as the structures of the Age of Empire were crumbling, there was a more general eruption of the non-dominant onto the previously neatly hierarchical fabric of British cultural life.”\textsuperscript{124} This was, in some ways, literally marked by the mass migration of colonial subjects from Africa, Asia and the Caribbean to Britain in the forties, fifties and sixties, a process that

\textsuperscript{119} Chen, “The formation of a Diasporic Intellectual,” 492.
\textsuperscript{120} Stratton and Ang, “On the Impossibility of a Global Cultural Studies,” 376.
\textsuperscript{122} Stratton and Ang, “On the Impossibility of a Global Cultural Studies,” 376.
brought the internalised racism that was central to British identity to the fore. But it was also for Stratton and Ang reflected in the emergence within British intellectual culture of “marginal” figures like Richard Hoggart, Raymond Williams and, of course, Hall.

What these three figures shared in common was their concern with making visible the conventional and constructed nature of British culture, a process which was underpinned by a concern with “opening up the terrain of the cultural for struggle, negotiation, and resistance.” Indeed, Stratton and Ang “suggest that the energizing impulse of British cultural studies has historically precisely lain in this critical concern with, and validation of, the subordinate, the marginalized, the subaltern within Britain.” My characterisation of Hall and British cultural studies in terms of a diasporic world view, however, carries with it a somewhat different focus on the relations between identity and culture. That is, in contrast to Stratton and Ang, I am less interested in the trope of marginality than I am in the notion of a displaced or fragmented concept of cultural identity. What I am arguing instead is that the “energizing impulse of British cultural studies” is drawn from the tension of being caught between cultures and identities, the contradictory positioning of somewhat like Hall—who came from a (lower) middle-class background, was educated alongside Britain’s social elite but was steeped in the culture of British working class socialism—being an exemplary case in point. Hall captures this experience of contradiction in an early article on social mobility and “the new classlessness” in post-war Britain, in his comments on the plight of “the ‘scholarship boy’, who retains some sense of allegiance to his family and community, [while having to] constantly draw the distinction within himself between the just motive of self-improvement (which took him to university in the first place) and the false motive of self-advancement.”

Where I do agree with Stratton and Ang, however, is in respect of their argument that central to the formation of cultural studies is “the recognition that there is not one ‘culture’ in ‘society’ but that any ‘society’ consists of a plurality of historically specific cultures structured in relations of dominance and subordination to each other,” cultures that therefore exist in a relation of struggle and contestation. It was this sense of culture as a site

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of struggle, then, that underpinned Hall’s own leftist politics and that saw him during his time at Oxford challenge some of the central political tenets of the old left.

ii. The Emergence of the New Left

While British society in the fifties was undergoing a series of dramatic transformations, an equivalent sense of crisis was being experienced within Britain’s traditional leftist institutions. As Ioan Davies observes, this crisis was essentially brought about by the events of 1956 with the Russian invasion of Hungary, and the involvement of the British (as well as the French and the Israelis) in the Suez crisis dealing a major blow to the ideological foundations of the British Left. Davies argues that, following these events, “international Bolshevism, Socialist Zionism and the British ‘civilizing mission’...were revealed as little more than fronts for naked imperialism.”

During his time in Britain in the fifties, then, Stuart Hall was confronted by a nation experiencing major socio-cultural changes and whose leftist political institutions were undergoing a process of intense self-examination. What this period of relative social and political instability provided, however, was an opportunity for Hall and other independent leftists to imagine an alternative political pathway for the British left, one that would attempt to grapple with these social and cultural shifts head on. What emerged out of this period, then, was a New Left movement that sought a path between the kind of “consensus politics of the centre” that dominated Britain at the time and the excesses of Stalinism. That is, in response to the general loss of innocence that now marked the space of British politics and the sense that the political project of the old left was now no longer completely relevant to contemporary concerns, the New Left attempted to open up what Hall has subsequently referred to as a “third” political space.

130 Davies, “Cultural Theory in Britain,” 117.
132 Hall, discussing the birth of the British New Left, notes that the term itself was inspired by the French political movement the *nouvelle gauche*, a movement associated with the newspaper *France Observateur* and its editor Claude Bourdet. As Hall points out, Bourdet at the time sought a third political space between the major left alternatives of Stalinism and social democracy, a political aspiration that resonated with the radical humanist concerns of the early British New Left. Stuart Hall, “The ‘First’ New Left: Life and Times,” *Out of
Oxford University appears, at first glance to be one of the more unlikely contexts for the development of a leftist political movement that sought to move beyond traditional party politics. Hall’s depiction of Oxford in the fifties as a place dominated by a deadening cultural conservatism and a “willed triviality” (marked by nostalgic attempts to recreate a kind of Brideshead Revisited atmosphere on campus) hardly suggests the kind of setting conducive to radical thought. In some ways, however, it was probably the unreconstructed conservatism of the Oxford scene at a time when the rest of Britain was experiencing tremendous social and cultural upheaval that lead to the reactionary formation of “an alternative...intellectual minority culture.” As Hall comments “[o]utsiders like myself found it particularly hard to adjust to being catapulted into the centre of the process by which the English class system reproduced itself, educationally and culturally.” Thus, it was “outsider” figures like Hall (along with various British born “scholarship boys”) who, because of their heightened sense of the cultural disjunctures between the political left and hegemonic cultural institutions like Oxford, rebelled against the dominant intellectual and political concerns of the day by forming various New Left clubs and publishing leftist journals; the events of 1956 leading in particular to the emergence of two journals, the Universities and Left Review (ULR) and the The New Reasoner (NR), which subsequently merged in 1960 to form the New Left Review.

The NR, which was initially edited by E. P. Thompson among others, did not mark a radical break with the old left, however, but emerged out of the more traditionally leftist circles of the Communist Party and the “Popular Front” socialist politics of the thirties. In contrast, the ULR, edited by Stuart Hall, Charles Taylor (who was Canadian), Raphael Samuel and

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133 Hall’s first introduction to the left in Britain was through the socialist teachings of G. D. H. Cole, a lecturer in politics at Oxford who held graduate seminars that “doubled up as a wide-ranging discussion group of the broad left.” Hall, “The ‘First’ New Left: Life and Times,” 16.


137 The so-called “scholarship boys,” such as Richard Hoggart and Raymond Williams, were students from working-class backgrounds who via scholarships to grammar schools and to universities were able to gain entry to an education system previously reserved for the British class elite.

138 The Reasoner, which first appeared in the aftermath of Hungary as an internal critique of communism, was quashed by the party. Many CP members who at that stage either left or were expelled from the party subsequently found a place within the New Left. Hall, “The ‘First’ New Left: Life and Times,” 21.
Gabriel Pearson (both of whom were Jewish), came out of the Oxford student protest movement and had no direct party connections. Hall recalls the fact that the divisions between these two generations of leftist politics were paralleled by significant geographical and class differences. More specifically, the NR was based in northern England and possessed integral connections to rural working-class communities while the Oxford/London based “ULR-ers” were more aligned with cosmopolitan, modernist concerns and tended to be either middle-class or “upwardly mobile.” As Hall confesses “[a]s a colonial, I certainly felt instinctively more at home in the more socially anonymous metropolitan culture, though I regretted ULR’s lack of organic connections to non-metropolitan working-class life.”

Here Hall’s awareness of the tensions between his own middle-class, cosmopolitan identification and the more traditional working-class affiliations of the British left foregrounds the sense of disparity and disjuncture that I argue was central to the formation of the New Left and British cultural studies. As I discuss later, this experience of cultural fragmentation was subsequently reflected in the shift within cultural studies towards non-class based accounts of social identity and the foregrounding of cultural identities as hybridised, discursive formations. In the fifties, sixties and seventies, however, Hall, the New Left and cultural studies in its early conception continued to be grounded in a primarily Marxist, class-based politics.

Ironically, it was this very framework that provided the New Left and subsequently cultural studies with the tools for examining the dramatic transformation of Britain’s old class structures in the post-war period. As Hall argued in an early Marxian analysis of the impact of consumer capitalism on British society called “A Sense of Classlessness,” “the ‘whole way of life’ [of organic working class culture was] breaking down into several styles of living.” However, Marxist theory not only provided figures like Hall with a way of “reading” the shifts occurring in British social life, it also I would argue enabled the New Left to start to think in terms of the questions of cultural struggle that were later to become a central theme in cultural studies work. Thus, in “A Sense of Classlessness,” Hall’s depiction of the demise

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140 In the light of the events of 1956, Hall decided to quit his graduate work on Henry James. Instead, in 1957, he left Oxford and moved to London where he worked full-time as a secondary school teacher in south London at the same time as editing the *ULR* in Soho. Chen, “The Formation of a Diasporic Intellectual,” 493.
of the traditional working class, while tinged with some nostalgia for the solidarity of working class communities, at the same time offers some early insights into the exclusionary and contested nature of cultural identity (as well as into his own contradictory relationship with traditional working class culture). As Hall comments “[s]olid as the old working class communities were, they were often, of necessity, defensive or aggressive towards other communities, other national and racial groups, towards the ‘queer’ fellow and the ‘odd man out,’ towards the ‘scholarship boy’ or even, sometimes, the militant.”

Thus, while class politics continued to dominate left political culture, Hall, along with other intellectuals sensitive to the increasingly fractured nature of British culture, played an important role in pushing the boundaries of traditional British leftist politics. This attempt to make the left more relevant to contemporary Britain saw events such as the merger of the NR and the ULR to form the New Left Review, the latter publication (edited during its first two years by Stuart Hall) reflecting an unorthodox ULR-dominated approach to leftist issues and Marxist theory that in turn signalled the New Left’s move away from organised party formations towards a politics built along new social movements lines. One example of this shift was the attempt to forge a link between the New Left and the various social and political groups that coalesced around the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND). Despite the New Left’s failure to mobilise the diverse social interests represented by the traditional left and the CND (as well as other social groups such as the women’s movement) into an effective historical bloc, Hall argues that the CND-New Left coalition represented “a deep involvement with what was one of the earliest ‘new social movements’; thus we were in the forefront of what was to become, post-1968, the ‘new politics’.”

In terms of viewing the emergence of cultural studies from a diasporic perspective, this shift to a coalition politics I would argue can be seen as a recognition by the New Left and figures like Hall of the breakdown of traditional conceptions of class politics and their replacement with a broader notion of identity politics. While the New Left’s embrace of a broader notion of social identity still tended to be framed within a Marxist paradigm, this paradigm was starting to shift towards a model that would later come to dominate cultural studies. In particular, I am thinking here of the Gramscian version of Marxism that in the seventies came

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143 Hall, “A Sense of Classlessness,” 27.
to the fore at the CCCS. In Hall’s reading of Gramsci, for instance, the necessary relations between class identification and politics which underpinned the “vulgar materialism” of traditional Marxism were replaced with a “Marxism without guarantees.” In this latter version of Marxism, political struggle was no longer located solely in the realm of class and economics but was also seen as being played out in the superstructural sphere of culture and ideology.

The impetus for this turn to culture was not only provided by the social movement politics of the New Left and the New Left Review with its focus on popular cultural issues but of course also had its roots in the alternative representations of British life offered in Richard Hoggart’s *The Uses of Literacy* (1957), and E. P. Thompson’s *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963). Also, Raymond Williams’s legacy of cultural critique put forward in pivotal texts such as *Culture and Society 1780-1950* (1958) and *The Long Revolution* (1961) needs to be acknowledged here as having a formative effect on Hall and the development of British cultural studies. Again what was of course pivotal about Williams’ impact on cultural studies was his eccentric relationship to British culture. Like Hall, Williams was marked by a fraught political-intellectual identity being at once steeped in a traditional British intellectual culture (specifically Leavisite literary criticism), drawn to the critical Marxist tradition, and, as Ioan Davies notes, possessing a “strong sense of colonial marginality derived from his Welsh roots.”

This insider-outsider relationship to British culture provided Williams with an ideal vantage point from which to reframe traditional accounts of British history and culture. In particular, he reworked the traditional Leavisite preoccupation with high culture expanding its analytic frameworks to include the everyday cultural processes that made up the lives of “ordinary” people.

The work of Hall and other New Lefters on popular culture and the media can be seen as following in the footsteps of this approach. For example, in “Class and the Mass Media,” an essay published in 1967 as part of a more general symposium on class issues, the influence of the work of “founding fathers” such as Williams on Hall’s thinking was apparent in his concern with the “structures of feeling” that give coherency to class culture and his frequent

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references to texts like William’s *The Long Revolution* and Thompson’s *The Making of the English Working Class*. And, like Williams, class at this point was still central for Hall who comments in the essay that while “[w]e have many ways of experiencing ourselves, socially, apart from class...it is primarily within class relationships that diverse social experiences come to hang together and compose, roughly, one social situation for any group.”

However, unlike Hoggart and Williams, Hall was less interested in recovering the purportedly *organic* working class culture of Britain’s pre-war past than he was concerned with theorising the new culture of consumerism, the increasing role of the media in contemporary society and the impact of upward mobility on class relations in post-war Britain. As Colin Sparks suggests, Hoggart and William’s own provincial working class British backgrounds strongly flavoured their views on class culture and resulted in a tendency to hold onto a somewhat nostalgic view of working class culture and values. In contrast, Hall’s experiences in an upwardly-mobile and middle-class family, his ambiguous location between an indigenous and colonised culture in Jamaica, and his attraction to modernist, urban culture, all no doubt contributed to an identification with the fluid and shifting nature of contemporary British social relations and social identity. As Sparks comments

> [t]he new world of the affluent worker, of the mass media and of upward mobility, which was seen by the other writers as a threat to the integrity and independence of the working class and its culture, were taken by Hall as the starting-point for his analysis...Hall’s distinctive contribution to the formation of cultural studies was to insist on an urgent sense of engagement with the contemporary.  

### iii. Contemporary Cultural Studies at the “Centre”

After Hall worked as the editor for the *New Left Review* for two years, he was appointed to a lectureship at the University of London teaching film and mass media studies (at that time the only post of its type in Britain). Meanwhile, he had also been working with Paddy Whannel, in conjunction with the British Film Institute, in the area of film studies. This collaboration

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148 Hall, “Class and the Mass Media,” 93.
149 Colin Sparks, “Stuart Hall, Cultural Studies and Marxism,” *Stuart Hall 78*. 
resulted in the publication in 1964 of the groundbreaking work *The Popular Arts;* a book that in its treatment of new media forms as social texts represented a significant break with the Leavisite tradition of high cultural criticism that had gone before and set the stage for much of the cultural studies work that was to follow in the sixties and seventies. Hall’s critical writings on the media, his work with Paddy Whannel and the BFI, as well as his involvement in teaching media studies at the University of London in the early sixties could be seen to represent an early form of British cultural studies, in the sense that this period in Hall’s life was marked by an engagement with some of the major cultural changes occurring in contemporary Britain at the time. However, it was not until Hall and Hoggart set up the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (initially purely a postgraduate oriented research and teaching centre) at the University of Birmingham in 1964 that we can identify the emergence of a systematic field of study primarily concerned with grappling with the social and cultural changes taking place in post-war Britain.

If Oxford University seemed an unusual site for the development of the New Left, then the English department at the University of Birmingham—steeped as it was in an implicitly Arnoldian ethos—was perhaps an even more surprising location for the emergence of a “field” concerned with questioning the humanist values underpinning the elitist Arnoldian view of culture. As Hall has documented, the English department, having appointed Richard Hoggart to a professorship, was perhaps not surprisingly rather dismayed when he announced his intentions to continue the work he had started in *The Uses of Literacy* on the impact of mass culture on working-class experience. Hall notes that the department actually refused to fund any such research forcing Hoggart to use his own money to employ a Research Fellow to set up and maintain the CCCS, namely Stuart Hall (whose media work and knowledge of the Leavisite debates made him an ideal candidate for the job).

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152 The radicality of the move is highlighted by the fact that the majority of the left-liberal intelligentsia of the time still fervently upheld the importance of high cultural values against what was perceived as a degraded mass (American) culture. See Alan Sinfield’s discussion of the reasons for the development of what he terms “left-culturalism” in *Literature, Politics and Culture in Postwar Britain* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989) 241-245.
154 Interestingly, Hoggart actually obtained the funds with which he established the Centre for Cultural Studies from Penguin books who provided him with a yearly donation as thanks for his testifying in the *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* Trial. Chen, “The formation of a Diasporic Intellectual,” 498.
Thus while the (somewhat ironically titled) Centre was located within a University department, from the outset it had a rather marginal status within the University structure, a status that in many ways allowed the CCCS to develop a much more radical intellectual agenda than was possible in the more academically entrenched disciplines of history, English and sociology. The University’s treatment of the Centre’s project as provisional meant that while the CCCS was at times under threat of closure, unlike other academic departments, it was not forced to maintain an undergraduate programme and was therefore able to channel many of its resources directly into researching and theorising the wider social and cultural issues of the time.

As Hall has noted “[n]o place existed at that stage, whether in the social sciences or in the humanities, where one could find the concept of culture seriously theorized.” In this sense, the CCCS had to start from scratch in terms of constructing its own models of the workings of everyday culture. As Hall describes, this process involved “raiding” the resources of other disciplines and more often than not deconstructing those traditional frameworks in order to reconstruct them as useful tools for a still fledgling cultural studies paradigm. While these interdisciplinary influences proved important to the initial development of cultural studies, the increasing availability of European theoretical texts in the sixties and seventies had a dramatic impact on cultural studies largely providing the impetus for its subsequent theoretical trajectory.

For much of the sixties and seventies activities at the Centre were oriented around teasing out which theoretical models and approaches might be useful for applying specifically to the

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155 Hall notes that in its early days cultural studies was even spatially marginalised within the layout of the academic campus, commenting on the fact that “[t]hroughout the 1960s...we were moved from one temporary residence to another, in and out of a series of Quonset huts, provisional structures built during the war and intended to last about six months.” Hall, “The Emergence of Cultural Studies,” 13.

156 As Hall notes, in the 1970s the CCCS only ever had three teachers and one research fellow, so that much of the research undertaken by the centre was carried out by graduate students many of whom subsequently became the “leading lights” of cultural studies. Hall, “The Emergence of Cultural Studies,” 16.

157 For example, cultural studies appropriated aspects of the work done in the more “alternative” streams of sociology (such as ethnomethodology and social interactionism) for its own research agenda. However, as Hall points out, there was little work being done at the time in British social theory between the two extremes of structuralism-functionalism and Weberianism. By contrast, Western Marxism, via the translation of Lukacs, Goldmann, Benjamin and the Frankfurt School and Sartre, seemed to offer a way of giving theoretical weight to both structure and agency. Stuart Hall, “Cultural Studies and the Centre: Some Problematics and Problems,”
problems of English culture. However, it was not until the mid-seventies that the large, multi-authored critiques of British cultural life that have now become synonymous with the “Birmingham school” approach began to emerge. Of course during this period Hall continued to write on issues to do with popular culture, the media, and mass communications, culminating in the publication of his pivotal essay on encoding and decoding media texts in 1973, while the Centre itself produced a series of stencilled papers as well as its own journal, *Working Papers in Cultural Studies* (first published in 1972). For the most part, however, this period can be characterised by the search for theoretical apparatuses appropriate to British cultural life, a process which saw cultural studies and the New Left largely looking to European intellectual traditions.

The *New Left Review*, in particular, took upon itself the enormous task of translating European texts (from the Frankfurt school through to French “theory”) unavailable in English at that time. When Hall resigned as editor in 1962, the journal changed its format under the editorial guidance of Perry Anderson to that of a more traditional academic journal that was less concerned with the social movement issues championed by Hall than it was with broad theoretical issues. However, as Ioan Davies points out, despite this shift in focus the journal still had a tremendous impact on the British New Left in the sixties and seventies as a result of its central concern with bringing European theory to the attention of what it saw as a stagnating British intellectual culture. For Hall, this second “break” within the New Left was crucial for the development of cultural studies. Indeed, he has recently suggested that “[w]ithout those ‘Ur-texts’ [namely, the translated works of the Frankfurt school, Benjamin and later Gramsci] which no one was reading inside the academy, cultural studies could not have developed its own project: it could not have survived; it could not have become a field of work in its own right.”

iv. The Move to Theory

Perry Anderson has famously argued that the exceptional stability of British capitalism and, in particular, the lack of “a revolutionary challenge from below” has had a “chloroforming

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159 Hall, “Cultural Studies and the Centre,” 16.

160 Davies, “Cultural Theory in Britain,” 120.
effect” on critical English thought, stifling “intellectual questioning of the existing order and depriving political opposition on the Left of the resources needed to understand its society, the condition of changing it.” Likewise, Ioan Davies has noted that, in contrast to “the great totalizing schemas of the Continent,” British cultural theory has always been a rather “ad hoc” affair, while, Bryan S. Turner contends that English social thought has traditionally rejected “idealism and grand theory” in favour of empiricism and utilitarianism.

Despite this conservative legacy, as I have suggested earlier, a critical response to the British intellectual and political status quo did start to emerge in the late fifties with the publication of historically and culturally revisionist texts by leftist figures like Thompson, Williams and Hoggart. As Ioan Davies has argued in relation to Williams’ *oeuvre*, “[i]n many respects he was pivotal in creating the cultural/political sociology which Anderson saw as absent in the British intellectual tradition.” As I have previously suggested, however, rather than simply representing a revolutionary challenge from below, the political persona of a socially mobile, scholarship boy like Williams whose work was also inflected by a critical colonial consciousness was somewhat more complex. What the emergence of Williams’ work in the late fifties and sixties represented, then, was the beginnings of a critique of English cultural imperialism in which voices from the cultural and political fringes of English life began to be heard, a critique that took another decade or so to gain full force.

Ioan Davies notes that, while in the sixties the *New Left Review* shifted the New Left agenda away from a primary concern with social movement politics to a focus on critical political theory, it wasn’t until the seventies that Britain saw the formation of a coherent critical intellectual culture marked by the emergence of a number of New Left research centres and publishing sites. Thus, while the CCCS (of which Hall was the director from 1968 to 1979) played a pivotal role in the process, those at the Centre were hardly lone voices as the seventies also saw the formation of a number of other university-based departments and research units with New Left orientations as well as the emergence of a series of journals.

161 Hall, “The Emergence of Cultural Studies,” 16.
166 Davies, “British Cultural Marxism,” 327.
(Screen, Radical Philosophy, m/f, Feminist Review and Spare Rib) and publishing houses (Merlin Press, Pluto Press, Harvester) with critical leftist leanings.\textsuperscript{167}

One of the main outcomes of this broad institutionalisation of leftist intellectual thought was the emergence of a considerable body of work that attempted to use European “grand theory” to open up a series of questions and debates about specifically English cultural concerns, a process that of course raised questions about the status of Englishness itself. While obviously this self-reflexive turn to “foreign” theory reflected in part the gradual infiltration of British intellectual culture by various “outsider” figures, the turn within British intellectual circles towards Europe could also be seen as representing a broader shift within British identity as a whole. In particular, this moment could be seen as marking the final breakdown of Britain’s once sovereign imperial identity and its attempts to resituate itself as a “still important, middle-ranking power” by forging links (Britain joined the EEC in 1973) with an increasingly integrated Europe.\textsuperscript{168}

The opening up of the British left to more global influences, however, obviously was more than just a function of British foreign policy but rather reflected the series of complex socio-cultural changes experienced by a number of Western countries in the sixties and seventies. In particular, one of the main processes to impact on the politics and direction of British intellectual life in the seventies was the democratisation and rapid expansion of higher education from the sixties onwards (a process which as I note later in this thesis also significantly impacted on the development of cultural theory in Australia and the US). As Perry Anderson points out, the student population in Britain doubled in the period between 1960 and 1967/68 while the events of 1968 produced a significant and stable population of “radicalised graduates.”\textsuperscript{169} While the changing class mix of the student population obviously impacted significantly on British intellectual culture as a whole, in the area of British cultural studies in particular, I would argue, that another major influence was the increasing number of female students in the university system and the presence, for the first time, of black British-born students. It was in this broader context, then, that cultural studies found itself looking outside the English intellectual tradition to European models of culture and society.

\textsuperscript{167} Davies, “British Cultural Marxism,” 328.
\textsuperscript{169} Anderson, English Questions 195.
v. Western Marxism and the Politics of Cultural Identity

As a number of theorists have pointed out, the turn to European theory in the seventies represented a pivotal moment for British cultural studies. Bill Schwartz, for example, has argued that the encounter with “theory,” and in particular Western Marxism, involved a dramatic reorientation away from a primary focus on the meanings of “lived experience” to a concern with the relations between everyday culture and broader structures of power. Likewise, Colin Sparks constructs this theoretical moment as a shift from a more humanist approach to culture as an *expressive* form to a structuralist Marxist approach, in particular that of Althusserianism. While Sparks notes that initially the CCCS pursued a number of theoretical lines of inquiry, he argues that, under the guidance of Hall, “[t]he centre of attention shifted from the relations between base and superstructure into an elaboration of the internal articulation of the superstructure itself.”

In Sparks’ narrative, then, the CCCS, under the direction of Hall in the seventies, was dominated to the exclusion of other approaches by a Marxist focus on ideology. Certainly, in his essay on the theoretical legacies of British cultural studies, Hall seems to reinforce this monolithic account when he describes the emergence in the seventies of feminist and race-based approaches to theory as “interruptions in the work of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies.” Hall has also confessed that while he and Michael Green (who succeeded Hall as the Centre’s director in 1979) were aware of the growing importance of feminism and attempted to attract some feminist scholars to the CCCS, when feminism did finally “interrupt” the status quo at the centre it met with powerful resistance from the “fully installed patriarchal power, which believed it had disavowed itself.” Furthermore, in relation to the foregrounding of race as a central social category that needed to be theorised, Hall notes that “[a]ctually getting cultural studies to put on its own agenda the critical

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170 Schwartz 383.
171 Sparks 79-88.
172 Sparks 83.
questions of race...the critical questions of cultural politics...was itself a profound theoretical struggle."\(^{176}\)

In offering up a diasporic reading of the development of cultural studies, however, I would suggest that a more productive way of reading the various theoretical trajectories that intersected and “interrupted” each other at the Centre during this period is to see them as part of a broader struggle, a struggle that paralleled the wider concerns of a British culture whose identity was being challenged from a number of sources. Furthermore, Hall’s own ambivalent and ambiguous relation to these interruptions once again suggests the multiply displaced experience of the diasporic subject, a subject who in this case was being asked to identify as both oppressive patriarch and as racially marked subaltern. I would suggest that it was just this kind of complexity of experience that cultural studies sought to grapple with intellectually in the seventies and that in particular the shift from an Althusserian to a Gramscian-inflected Marxism marked an attempt to come to terms with the contradictory, socially constructed subject.

As Paul Jones notes in his discussion of pivotal CCCS texts such as *Policing the Crisis* (1978),\(^{177}\) the first of the Centre’s collectively produced works to deal systematically with the structural role of racism in the production of British identity in the post-war period, such publications “have been less theoretical abstracts, than interventions into popular/intellectual and political consensuses.”\(^{178}\) Thus, while cultural studies has tended to be portrayed as having progressed from culturalism, through structuralism and formalism to a point of “theoretical clarity,” Jones concludes that such narratives are of less concern than the fact that “the programme’s ongoing strength has been its ability to articulate adequately the interests, and the ‘actual social being and consciousness’ of those to whom it has remained politically committed.”\(^{179}\)

Like Jones, I would suggest that the developmental history of the CCCS is more than just a history of the reception of theoretical Marxism in Britain. As Hall himself has commented,

\(^{176}\) Hall, “Cultural Studies and its Theoretical Legacies,” 283.
\(^{179}\) Jones 119.
both the New Left and subsequently cultural studies “always regarded Marxism as a problem, as a trouble, as danger, not as a solution.”\textsuperscript{180} Furthermore, in Hall’s case this encounter with Marxism “required a not-yet-completed contestation with the profound Eurocentrism of Marxism.”\textsuperscript{181} The pattern of the Centre’s engagement with Western Marxism was marked, then, by this awareness of a gap between the explanatory models offered up and the complexity of socio-cultural relations in contemporary Britain. The seventies, in particular, was the time when class began to be challenged as the marker of subalternity by feminist and race-based accounts of social inequality. In the remainder of this section I want to briefly discuss the Centre’s engagement with Marxism during this period before going on to link these theoretical trajectories with the shift towards identity politics heralded by the foregrounding of race and gender within British cultural studies.

The early encounters between British cultural studies and Marxism had been marked by a concern with the reductive, economistic nature of so-called vulgar Marxism, that is by a sense that Marxist theory was unable to capture the complexity of contemporary socio-cultural relations. The attraction of European Marxism in the seventies, particularly in its Althusserian guise, was that Althusser’s conception of the relative autonomy of ideological production enabled a move away from a purely expressive model of culture. The shift to Althusserianism, however, posed a number of problems for cultural studies. In particular, the tendency to view the cultural field as a realm for the production and reproduction of dominant ideologies allowed little space for moments of contestation or resistance while Althusser’s conception of the interpellated subject of ideology tended to foreclose the possibility of agency.\textsuperscript{182}

The turn to Gramsci offered cultural studies a way out of some of the more restrictive and totalising aspects of structuralist Marxism while foregrounding Hall’s argument that Marxism represented a “problem” to be struggled over rather than a “solution.” For what Gramsci offered, particularly in his complex revision of the term hegemony, was a political account that worked within the “epochal” concepts of Marxism while also modifying those concepts so that they could be usefully applied to specific, historical contexts.\textsuperscript{183} Thus, Gramsci’s

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\textsuperscript{180} Hall, “Cultural Studies and its Theoretical Legacies,” 279. \\
\textsuperscript{181} Hall, “Cultural Studies and its Theoretical Legacies,” 279. \\
\textsuperscript{182} The apotheosis of Althusserianism could be found in \textit{Screen’s} ultimately coercive theory of ideology. \\
\end{flushleft}
version of Marxism, as applied by figures like Hall, took cultural studies further away from reductive and deterministic social and cultural theories towards what Hall later called a “Marxism without guarantees” or what Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe have termed “post-marxism.” In particular, what I want to argue here in relation to the shift towards gender and race which began to occur in the mid to late seventies within British cultural studies, is that Hall’s Gramscian turn also enabled rather than foreclosed a turn within British cultural studies towards foregrounding the politics of cultural identity.

The first collaborative piece of work to come out of the Centre, *Resistance Through Rituals*, attempted to draw upon some of the insights of European Marxism in order come to grips with the disjuncture between the ideology of class mobility and consumer capitalism and the realities of working-class life for British youth. Thus, while so-called “subcultural” experience was viewed as a response to broader socio-economic changes within seventies Britain, the book also focused on the contradictions between ideology and experience seeing the moments of resistance played out within subcultural “style” as markers of the cultural struggle that underpins capitalist relations of hegemony.

The adoption here of a specifically Gramscian notion of hegemony marked an important development within the Centre. Hall has suggested that three main themes stand out in Gramsci’s re-formulation of hegemony. Firstly, hegemony is not permanent but represents an “historically specific, and temporary ‘moment’ in the life of a society.” Secondly, the struggle over hegemony does not occur at purely one level (for instance, the economic) but is fought out within a variety of arenas. And thirdly, hegemony is no longer held by a ruling class but rather belongs to an historic bloc, representing an alliance between a range of social groups. The importance of this complex conception of hegemony for British cultural studies was that it enabled Hall and others to apply a broad-based, Marxist theory of power to the specific political situation of seventies Britain and to analyse simultaneously the various social and cultural institutions through which the state sought the “consent” of “the people.” What was particularly crucial in Gramsci’s model of power, however, was that the subject of ideology it presupposed “refuses any idea of a pre-given unified ideological subject”

recognising instead “the ‘plurality’ of selves or identities of which the so-called ‘subject’…is composed.”

Thus, while the emergence within the CCCS of a feminist critique of culture, for example, has been depicted as a moment of interruption in the Centre’s Marxist-dominated agenda, another reading of this moment might be that the introduction of gender into the debates over culture intersected with and expanded upon a Gramscian concern with conceptualising the social subject as contradictory and socially constructed. This is not to deny that the arrival of feminism and, in particular, the publication in 1978 of *Women Take Issue* represented a major challenge to the institutional and intellectual politics of the male dominated CCCS. As Hall has noted in a recent interview, along with a number of other factors, one of the reasons he finally left the CCCS for the Open University in 1979 was because of the difficulty of being pro-feminism at the same time as being positioned “as the senior patriarchal figure” at the Centre. Nevertheless, as Anne Balsamo has argued, alongside the various other strains within feminist thought that impacted on British cultural studies, such as Lacanian psychoanalysis, the revisionist version of Marxist cultural studies put forward in *Women Take Issue* crucially contributed “to the development of an understanding of the articulation of sex, gender, and class in the organisation of social relations.”

Another crucial turning point for the CCCS in relation to its foregrounding of questions of cultural identity was the emergence of the question of race in cultural studies. While some of the subcultural studies at the Centre had touched upon questions of ethnicity, *Policing the Crisis* was the first CCCS publication to deal systematically with race. Based around a specific event, the case of three racially-marked youths who were given extreme prison sentences for the “mugging” of a man in 1972 in the black dominated area of Handsworth in Birmingham, *Policing the Crisis* attempted to provide a broad-sweeping analysis of the break-down of political consensus that characterised seventies Britain and the way in which this crisis of consensus was ideologically managed by generating a sense of “moral panic” within Britain around the issue of black criminality. Analysing the way in which traditional

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188 See Charlotte Brunsdon’s discussion of the impact of feminism on the CCCS in “A Thief in the Night: Stories of Feminism in the 1970s at CCCS,” *Stuart Hall* 278.
working class themes such as work, respectability, and nationhood were mobilised as shared signifiers to build a cross-class consensus, the account provided in *Policing the Crisis* illustrated Gramsci’s notion of hegemony as a historically specific process that relies upon forging an historic bloc or alliance between often apparently disparate social groups. More specifically, what it demonstrated was that the “values” of the British working class had no particular attachment to a progressive politics but instead could be mobilised for essentially conservative ends, in this case to support “an authoritarian consensus” based structurally upon racism.

Furthermore, what the CCCS’ analysis also illustrated was the increasingly central role played by race in shoring up British identity thus indicating the growing internal tensions around questions of identity and culture in post-imperial Britain. As Hall has commented, the publication of *Policing the Crisis* “represented a decisive turn in my own theoretical and intellectual work, as well as that of the centre”\(^{192}\) in the sense that it recognised that social categories other than class play a formative role in hegemonic struggles while also moving some way towards an understanding of the mutually constitutive nature of “blackness” and “Britishness” in contemporary Britain. This work was further consolidated with the publication in 1982 of *The Empire Strikes Back: Race and Racism in 70s Britain*,\(^{193}\) a book that was co-authored by a group of up-and-coming new black intellectuals including Paul Gilroy, Hazel Carby and Pratibha Parmar and that acted as a catalyst for a dispersed set of black activists, artists and critics operating around the country but especially concentrated in London and around the CCCS.

Charting the trajectories of a “cultural politics of diaspora” within Britain in the eighties and nineties, Kobena Mercer has argued that the publication of *The Empire Strikes Back* and a number of other cultural studies-oriented critiques of race in the early eighties “saw the gathering of critical mass through collectivist activities whose emergent agendas began to impact upon public institutions during the mid-eighties around the key theme of *black representation*.”\(^{194}\) In particular, the race-based approach to cultural studies that began to

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\(^{191}\) Hall, Critcher, Jefferson, Clarke and Roberts viii.
\(^{192}\) Hall, “Cultural Studies and its Theoretical Legacies,” 283.
\(^{193}\) Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, *The Empire Strikes Back: Race and Racism in 70s Britain* (London: Hutchinson, 1982).
emerge at the CCCS in the eighties drew upon and fed into the black visual arts and more specifically black British film with figures like the then London-based filmmaker Isaac Julien as well as film collectives such as Sakofa and the Black Audio Film Collective playing a central role in interrogating the politics of racism. Out of this broader foregrounding of black representation emerged a field known as black cultural studies with Paul Gilroy’s pivotal and influential book *There Ain’t No Black in the Union Jack* (1987) arguably representing the first self-consciously black British cultural studies text.

The foregrounding of “blackness” as a category of identity, then, marked an important moment for cultural studies in terms of its theorisation of the politics of identity. In particular, the emergence of the term “black” as a strategic model of identity with which a variety of ethnic and cultural groups within the British Afro-Caribbean and “Asian” communities could identify necessitated a complete break with ahistorical, essentialist conceptions of the relations between identity and politics. Here, then, the tensions between questions of class, gender, race, institutional and geographic location that had circulated within the New Left and cultural studies over the years began to be theorised according to a complex, Gramscian-inflected model of identity. As Hall argues, discussing the emergence of a collective black identity in Britain in the seventies

‘Black’ is thus an example, not only of the political character of the new identities—i.e. their positional and conjunctural character (their formation in and for specific times and places)—but also of the way identity and difference are inextricably articulated or knitted together in different identities, the one never wholly obliterating the other.

**vi. Thatcherism, New Times and the Return of Ethnicity**

In 1979 Stuart Hall left the CCCS to take up a position at the Open University, an institution where he felt he would be better able to direct the political and intellectual concerns of

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195 For a discussion of the role Stuart Hall played in the production of pivotal black British films such as *Looking for Langston* and *The Passion of Remembrance* (films which also complicate the notion of a purely black politics by dealing with issues of sexuality) see Isaac Julien and Mark Nash, “Dialogues with Stuart Hall,” *Stuart Hall* 476-483.
cultural studies to a broader, more “popular” audience.\(^{196}\) He continued working at the Open University through the eighties and nineties only recently retiring as Head of Sociology.\(^{197}\) One of his major published works during this period was *The Hard Road to Renewal*, a collection of essays which addressed what Hall characterised as a “historic turning-point in postwar British political and cultural life,”\(^{198}\) that is, the turn, in the mid-seventies towards the right and the subsequent “iron” reign of Thatcher from 1978 to 1988. For Hall, Thatcher’s overwhelming success in gaining the popular consent of the working class for its New Right economic directives signalled the need for a radical rethink of left politics. Where labourite policies had failed and Thatcherism had succeeded was in the latter’s recognition that Britain’s social landscape had undergone a series of radical changes that in turn required a radical new form of politics. In particular, the conservatives seemed to instinctively recognise that the struggle for a new politics needed to be fought out in the realm of culture.

Continuing on from the early Gramscian analysis of conservative populism developed in *Policing the Crisis*, Hall described Thatcher’s politics in terms of an “authoritarian populism” whereby the working class had been interpellated into a set of political strategies that were held up as commonsense truths. In particular, one of the central concerns of Hall’s analysis was the way in which Thatcher had managed to forge an imaginary sense of unity among the “people” around the issues of race and Englishness. Thus, while Britain’s “national culture” had been under threat for some time following the decline of imperialism, the impact of globalisation and the transformation of the world market, Hall argued that Thatcher exploited this crisis of identity by relocating Englishness within “a narrower but firmer definition than it ever had before.”\(^{199}\)

Questions of race and identity were thus at the centre of Hall’s interrogation of Thatcherism and, during his time at the Open University in the eighties, Hall published a number of articles on race and ideology, the media and representations of race, and the relevance of Marxism to questions of race. In the late eighties, however, Hall’s work on race, culture and


\(^{197}\) Hall recently retired leaving the position to be filled by Tony Bennett, a British cultural theorist who prior to the OU appointment was Professor of Cultural Studies and Director of the Australian Key Centre for Cultural and Media Policy at Griffith University.


identity took a decisive turn away from a focus on race and blackness as marginal and negatively represented within hegemonic constructions of Englishness to a rather different mode of analysis in which ethnicity rather than race became the privileged term. In the latter mode, rather than seeing ethnicity as “othered,” Hall began to argue that in fact what characterised everyday experience in contemporary societies such as Britain was the foregrounding or centring of ethnicity and cultural identity. For example, in an article first published in 1988, Hall made the claim that migrancy had now paradoxically become “the representative modern experience!”

What Hall argued in his writings on cultural identity, diaspora and ethnicity and in a series of articles published in Marxism Today (and subsequently collected in a volume co-edited by Martin Jacques entitled New Times: The Changing Face of Politics in the 1990s) was that Thatcherism was in part the product of a set of broad political, social, economic and cultural transformations occurring throughout the Western world and that these shifts had witnessed the return of “the subject” to the political stage. In particular, Hall argued that the increasingly complex and differentiated nature of social life in Western societies had resulted in an expansion of identities available to the ordinary person and had opened up a space for a new politics of identity.

One of the hallmarks of this foregrounding of identity as a prime site of cultural contestation was the “surprising return of ethnicity.” However, unlike the reactionary notions of race and ethnicity that circulated within conservative debates over the crisis of British identity (debates underpinned largely by biologically essentialist and exclusionary definitions of cultural identity), Hall argued for the possibility of a positive interpretation of the turn to cultural identity that characterised the emergence of postmodernism and globalisation in Britain, counselling the left to embrace what he termed at the time the “new forms of ethnicity.” For Hall, “a more diverse conception of ethnicity” could be “set against the embattled, hegemonic conception of ‘Englishness’ which, under Thatcherism, stabilizes so much of the dominant political and cultural discourses, and which, because it is hegemonic,

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200 Hall, “Minimal Selves,” 134.
does not represent itself as an ethnicity at all.”

Such an approach to ethnicity would work to show that Englishness “is, after all, a very specific and peculiar form of ethnic identity. It is located in a place in a specific history...It is located in relation to a whole set of notions about territory, about where is home and where is overseas, what is close to us and what is far away.”

Hall argued that while Englishness had always been constructed as coherent and “natural,” in fact “[i]t was always negotiated against difference. It always had to absorb all the differences of class, or region, or gender, in order to present itself as a homogenous entity.” The dissolution of the relationship between national cultural identity and nation-states that accompanied the process of globalisation therefore revealed the constructed nature of Englishness. At the centre of this process of rethinking English identity was the figure of the diasporic subject, a figure whose position between cultures worked to foreground the conventional and exclusionary nature of “unified” cultures and ethnicities and who, as I have suggested in this chapter, played an important role in steering the development trajectory of British cultural studies.

Conclusion: From the Global to the Local or British Cultural Studies as a Diasporic Formation

Since the late eighties, then, there has been a broad shift within Hall’s work towards relocating British cultural studies’ concerns within a globalised framework and foregrounding the essentially decentred nature of ethnicity and identity, a shift that has also been mirrored in the diasporic work of black cultural studies figures like Paul Gilroy whose 1993 book The Black Atlantic attempts to make a radical break with “the dogmatic focus on discrete national dynamics which has characterised so much modern Euro-American cultural thought.” I have argued, however, that British cultural studies has from the outset been forged out of the tensions between national and transnational influences, that is, that British cultural studies has always to a certain degree had a globalised or diasporic identity. Likewise, the call from figures like Stratton and Ang to problematise the “Britishness” of

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204 Hall, “The Local and the Global,” 22.
British cultural studies and to re-read the formation through a more internationalist, postcolonially-inflected lens emerges out of this notion that cultural studies is essentially the product of large, global processes. As Bill Schwartz notes, however, re-contextualising cultural studies within a global setting carries with it certain dangers one of which is the reduction of the specific, conjunctural moments out of which British cultural studies emerged to a reified abstraction. In contrast, what I have done in this chapter is to retain a sense of the specifically British context out of which British cultural studies emerged while at the same time striving for “a sharper sense of how the local has been constituted globally.”

As a leading British cultural studies intellectual who migrated from the Caribbean, Stuart Hall has provided a particularly useful figure through which to re-locate the development of British cultural studies and “to think more imaginatively about the historical conditions which allowed cultural studies and its related fields of work to emerge.” In particular, Hall’s diasporic approach to intellectual politics, premised as it is upon a displaced or fractured consciousness, has offered a useful in-road to thinking about the way in which the formation and identity of British cultural studies has itself been marked by contradiction and incoherence. Rather than aligning cultural studies with some kind of “pure” type of marginality, then, I have attempted to illustrate the tensions that marked Hall’s life and career as a middle-class, university educated, black British intellectual. In other words, reading British cultural studies through a diasporic lens has provided a mechanism for rethinking its intellectual project and politics along more complex and contested lines.

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207 Schwartz 387.
208 Schwartz 387.
PART TWO
AMERICAN CULTURAL STUDIES: AN INTELLECTUAL AND DISCIPLINARY GENEALOGY

Introduction

My re-reading of British cultural studies and its intellectual practices via a diasporic framework reflects a growing trend towards conceptualising cultural studies and its development in trans-national terms. The introductions to two recent “survey” texts, John Storey’s *What is Cultural Studies?* (1996) and Ferguson and Golding’s *Cultural Studies in Question* (1997), for example, dwell not so much on the British roots of cultural studies but instead start from the premise that cultural studies is “a transnationalizing academic enterprise.”209 In their introduction, Ferguson and Golding declare that the focus of the book is on “the different routes cultural studies has pursued in the UK, the United States, Latin America, Australia and elsewhere”210 rather than one particular nationally-based model of cultural studies. Likewise, in the introduction to his cultural studies reader, Storey documents the migratory patterns of cultural studies as an intellectual movement that, over the past fifteen to twenty years, has “travelled” from Britain to Australia and to the United States, its international status as a movement being reflected, for Storey, in the transnational flavour of the editorial board of the journal *Cultural Studies*.211

However, as these texts proceed to discuss the concrete ways in which cultural studies has globalised a rather different picture begins to emerge. Ferguson and Golding’s book, despite its passing recognition of cultural studies work in Latin America, Australia and “elsewhere,” is actually largely focused around Anglo-American concerns with all but one of its contributors (a lecturer in mass communication in Amsterdam) being based in either Britain or the United States. In contrast, Storey’s collection *does* attempt to gesture towards a more transnational view of cultural studies, sampling essays from a fairly representative number of British, American and Australia scholars in the field. However, the supposedly global framing of the discussions contained in Storey’s text, is belied by a much more narrow focus

by a number of the contributors on the recent institutional success of cultural studies in the United States. Likewise, the primarily transatlantic focus of Ferguson and Golding’s collection suggests that the globalising process referred to in both of these accounts is in fact a coded term for a set of anxieties about the perceived “Americanisation” of cultural studies.\textsuperscript{212}

Frequently, then, recent discussions of the global expansion of cultural studies focus specifically on the appropriation of this once marginal intellectual movement by the United States academy. As Ferguson and Golding themselves comment elsewhere in their introduction, “[w]hat is unquestionable is that the U.S.A. is where cultural studies has achieved its greatest institutional following in terms of student numbers, courses and book sales.”\textsuperscript{213} Thus when Todd Gitlin, in his essay in the Ferguson and Golding collection on “The Anti-political Populism of Cultural Studies,” speaks of the “ascendancy of cultural studies” his discussion largely focuses on the situation in the American academy where “there has been a tremendous growth in the number of practitioners who identify with cultural studies.”\textsuperscript{214}

One of the most cogent statements concerning the role that the American academy has played in the globalisation of cultural studies comes from the American editors of \textit{Cultural Studies}, the influential collection of essays that emerged out of the proceedings of the international conference “Cultural Studies Now and in the Future” held at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in 1990. Early in their introduction to the collection, the editors cite Meaghan Morris’s claim that cultural studies is experiencing “an unprecedented international boom.”\textsuperscript{215} While essentially agreeing with Morris, they qualify her assertion by suggesting that the “international boom” to which Morris refers is particularly strong in the United States where “many academic institutions—presses, journals, hiring committees,

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\item[212] Of course the title of Ferguson and Golding’s book provides some insight into its rather skewed focus. Published following a debate on cultural studies held at the International Communication Association conference in 1993, the largely US or British-based contributors hail from communications, journalism and the social sciences. Reflecting the empiricist slant of these disciplines, from the outset, the editors set up what they see as the “abstract” and “theoreticist” approach of cultural studies work as a central problematic. This, in turn, is seen to be linked to the increasingly institutionalised nature of cultural studies, a process they note has occurred to some extent in the UK but has been especially marked in the United States.
\item[213] Ferguson and Golding, “Cultural Studies and Changing Times,” xvi.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
conferences, university curricula—have created significant investment opportunities in cultural studies.”

They sum up the forces at work with regards to the globalisation of cultural studies by stating that “while the cultural studies boom is certainly international, its economic value is largely conditioned by its academic expansion in North America.”

From these observations it would seem that while cultural studies is becoming increasingly internationalised, at the same time, the United States is increasingly becoming identified as a new imperial centre on the global cultural studies map. This is reflected in the fact that the relatively recent export of British cultural studies to the United States has dominated discussions over the future of cultural studies with many theorists equating the perceived Americanisation of cultural studies with its broader institutionalisation. In particular, cultural studies theorists concerned with preserving an “authentic,” British version of cultural studies have tended to depict the rise of cultural studies in the United States as being accompanied by its academic legitimation and therefore its depoliticisation. Constructing British cultural studies as an essentially anti-institutional movement linked to grass-roots rather than intellectual politics, figures like Stuart Hall have characterised the rise of cultural studies within the American academy “as a moment of profound danger.”

However, despite the fact that cultural studies has met with a certain degree of academic success in the United States (marked by the fact that its cause has been championed by powerful professional associations like the MLA and by the New York-based division of the major publishing firm Routledge), a number of commentators have painted a more ambiguous picture of its status within the US academy. Four years after the publication of the book Cultural Studies (itself an early instance of Routledge’s patronage of cultural studies), one of its editors, Cary Nelson, states in the introduction to his book Disciplinarity and Dissent in Cultural Studies (co-edited with Dilip Gaonkar) that while earlier debates over the future of American cultural studies foresaw the general institutionalisation of cultural

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218 Schwartz 386.
219 See, for instance, Stuart Hall’s comments on what he sees as the “rapid institutionalization” of cultural studies in “Cultural Studies and its Theoretical Legacies,” 285.
studies within the academy the reality has been somewhat different. 221 In particular, the budgetary cuts that have impacted on American humanities departments since the eighties have created a situation in which interdisciplinary fields such as cultural studies have had difficulty getting a foothold in an academic climate where many departments are struggling to protect their disciplinary status and authority. While cultural studies continues to circulate as a critical paradigm within certain disciplines, and while individual scholars may produce innovative cultural studies work, according to Nelson and Gaonkar, the reality is that graduate students with doctoral qualifications in cultural studies are unlikely to find employment in an academic climate “in which disciplinary cultural studies degree recipients and departmental hiring committees march to such different drummers.” 222 Elizabeth Long, in a recent essay on the relations between sociology and cultural studies in the United States asserts that, “despite the publicity garnered for cultural studies by its most famous practitioners, its status within the university is usually relatively precarious.” 223 Likewise, anthropologist Renato Rosaldo contends that “for all the intellectual excitement generated by the cultural studies movement, its material base seems pretty flimsy compared with that of established departments” 224 while Jonathan Culler notes that while cultural studies exists as a “field...in American publishing and intellectual life [it] does not yet have much of an existence in institutional structures.” 225

What these somewhat conflicting reports suggest then is that America, with its increasingly hegemonic hold over the academic publishing industry, is undeniably emerging as a major imperialising force in relation to global cultural studies. At the same time, however, it seems that the status of cultural studies within the American academy is much more complex and contradictory than this image implies. In this section of the thesis, I work to flesh out some of the internal contradictions within American cultural studies in an attempt to offer a more pluralist account of the reception of British cultural studies in the US academy. Thus, I want to move away from those discussions of cultural studies that equate its increasingly

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222 Nelson and Gaonkar 5.


transnational reach with its Americanisation, an approach that while possessing a certain critical validity in relation to the economic realities of the global academic market tends to prevent a more nuanced discussion of American cultural studies as a defined intellectual movement with a distinct developmental history. In particular, my discussion not only addresses the ways in which British cultural studies has recently travelled to the United States but I also map out some of the pre-existent, “native” cultural studies traditions that emerged prior or parallel to the rise of the Birmingham School. By engaging directly with the way in which the development of cultural studies in the US has been shaped and directed by a variety of local influences and pressures, my discussion problematises the notion that US cultural studies merely represents a commodified version of its British counterpart.

Given the enormous complexity of US intellectual culture, one useful way of containing my discussion of American cultural studies and its various genealogical trajectories is to focus my examination on some specific sets of intellectual practices. Just as I grounded my diasporic analysis of British cultural studies in a discussion of the intellectual career of Stuart Hall, so too my account here of US cultural studies is situated in relation to two important figures in the field, namely Andrew Ross and Lawrence Grossberg. As I’ve noted, accounts of the formation of American cultural studies have tended to be rather monolithic, ignoring the complexities and contradictions within this intellectual movement. Ted Striphas has argued in relation to cultural studies commentary in general, that there is often a gap between what he terms “the meta-discourse of cultural studies” and the institutional reality of cultural studies practices.\(^\text{226}\) I would argue that this gap is particularly marked in accounts of the emergence of cultural studies in the United States. Because discussions concerning the role and status of cultural studies in the American academy tend to be caught up in broader intellectual anxieties regarding the institutionalisation of knowledge, commentators (often for the sake of polemic) tend to reduce the diversity and complexity of the actuality of cultural studies practices in the United States to a convenient abstraction.\(^\text{227}\) My discussion of the


\(^{227}\) The problem with such abstractions was illustrated when the journal *Cultural Studies* recently attempted to gauge “the breadth of cultural studies’ institutional presence” internationally by sending out calls for information regarding any institutional formations that identify themselves as practising cultural studies. The relatively small number of responses from US academic formations (19 in total, a low number given the size of the United States academic system), and the diversity of institutional forms (ranging from programmes to units to schools based in universities, colleges and institutes) and disciplinary settings (from the usual suspects of English and literary studies, American studies and communications to a School of Cognitive Science and Cultural Studies and a Cultural Studies in Education unit), highlight some of the problems involved in mapping
specific intellectual practices and politics of Ross and Grossberg represents an attempt to mitigate against this kind of abstracted discourse. Furthermore, by examining the ways in which both Ross and Grossberg’s cultural studies careers have been negotiated through various institutional formations and sites I want to problematise the notion (associated in particular with the field of British cultural studies) that the cultural studies intellectual is necessarily an anti-institutional figure. My discussion, then, of Ross as a member of the professionalised left and my focus on Grossberg as an academicised cultural studies intellectual works to both locate American cultural studies in relation to two of its specific intellectual trajectories while also outlining the ways in which Ross and Grossberg’s intellectual practices have involved an open and critical engagement with—rather than a rejection of—institutionality, an engagement which distinguishes American cultural studies from the largely anti-institutional bent of British cultural studies.

An important institutional formation that has played a powerful role in shaping the intellectual framework of American cultural studies has been that of the academic discipline. Accordingly, in many of the debates over US cultural studies, particularly in relation to its institutionalisation, the field is often depicted as having been “disciplinised” by the academy. Thus, one of the most common explanations for the rise of US cultural studies is that English and literary studies departments in the eighties imported British cultural studies into the American academy and repackaged it as a new “brand” of literary theory. While I concur with those critics who have argued that English departments have played a powerful role in legitimating cultural studies within the US academy, my discussion of the disciplinary influences on American cultural studies complicates this picture somewhat. In particular, my focus on the disciplinary locations of Ross and Grossberg, that is on the fields of American studies and communications respectively, allows me to situate the recent encounter between cultural studies and English within a considerably longer tradition of American cultural theory, a tradition to which a variety of disciplinary formations have contributed.

228 Alan Wolfe, for example, argues that “[c]ultural studies’ is the latest wave to wash over humanities departments in the United States, following French literary theory and the new historicism.” Alan Wolfe, “The Culture of Cultural Studies,” Partisan Review 63 (1996): 485.
My discussion in this chapter is structured as follows; in the first section I discuss the broader context out of which cultural studies emerged as a major new player in the US humanities in the 1980s, mapping out the role played by English and literary studies in heralding the arrival of and legitimating this “new” field; in the second section I outline a “native” intellectual and disciplinary genealogical for American cultural studies via the figures of Andrew Ross and Lawrence Grossberg and their respective disciplines, American studies and communications; and, finally, in the third section I examine further the question of academicisation and cultural studies by analysing the intellectual politics and practices of both Grossberg and Ross, two radical cultural studies practitioners who are also highly professionalised academics.

I. THE RISE OF AMERICAN CULTURAL STUDIES

i. The Shift to the Right, Cultural Studies, and the Revitalisation of the Left?

It is one of the ironies of history...that at the moment in the early eighties when the project of the Birmingham Centre expired in the face of working-class support for Thatcher, it was reborn in the United States. Despite the fact that its original class project is equally difficult in an American polity dominated by Reagan, Bush and Perot, cultural studies, in the early nineties, is the most active and vigorous element within American humanities and social science programmes. 229

Colin MacCabe’s somewhat overdramatic interpretation of the exportation of cultural studies to the United States in the eighties (with US cultural studies rising phoenix-like from the ashes of British leftist politics) nevertheless usefully sets up a number of issues of concern to this discussion. As MacCabe’s naming of the conservative trinity of Reagan, Bush and Perot emphasises, the term “cultural studies” began to circulate widely in humanities circles at a time when America was experiencing a political turn to the right. 230 This conservative shift, however, was by no means limited to the political sphere. Rather, as Grossberg has pointed out, American conservatives in the eighties, like the British New Right, increasingly chose to

230 For their thoughts on this conjuncture of events also see Cary Nelson, “Always Already Cultural Studies: Academic Conferences and Manifestos,” What is Cultural Studies? 284-285; Jean Franco, “The Tabloid
fight their political wars on the cultural front. Two integral sites of cultural production and reproduction on which the Right have focused in particular have been the media sphere and the university system. In the case of the media, leftist intellectuals seeking to contribute to contemporary debates have found themselves marginalised within an increasingly conservative public sphere in which the roles of “expert commentator” and “cultural critic” have been filled by neo-conservative intellectuals backed by right-wing think-tanks and where ultra-conservatives like Rush Limbaugh use popular media forms such as talk radio to articulate the concerns of the “people.”

Alongside this “hijacking” of the media sphere by a neo-conservative agenda, another powerful “culture industry” that has felt the impact of this cultural and political shift to the right has been the university system. The most visible attacks on United States universities have been couched in moral or ethical terms (often presented in the media under the by-line of “the culture wars”), with right wing intellectuals targeting the supposed politicisation of education that is seen to have accompanied the impact of identity politics on the academy and the foregrounding of Theory within the humanities. However, in an academic field whose “education and cultural products in general are a vast economic sphere in their own right,” the custodial battles being fought over education have occurred not only at a moral-political level but, perhaps more devastatingly, have been translated into policy and funding decisions.

As George Lipsitz has pointed out, while the tertiary education sector expanded dramatically in the United States from the fifties to the seventies, the economic recessions of the seventies saw the state contribution to education funding drop significantly while private sector contributions to universities increased. In the eighties, then, the neo-conservative attacks on the perceived “adversary culture” of universities impacted on a education system that had become increasingly privatised and whose humanities and liberal arts programmes were

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consequently vulnerable to external economic and policy pressures. Furthermore, as Ellen Messer-Davidow thoroughly documents in her essay on the political and institutional context in which cultural studies practitioners are operating in America in the nineties, an organised neo-conservative coalition of extra-academic institutions such as private think-tanks and foundations, quasi-public media organisations and right wing-leaning governmental agencies has been increasingly putting financial and political pressure on the humanities.

The growing influence of conservative forces on the humanities reached its apotheosis in a speech given by Lynne Cheney, the then chairperson of the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), to the 1988 meeting of the American Council of Learned Societies where she expressed concern about “the state of the humanities” and attacked the critical coalition of “feminist criticism, Marxism, [and] various forms of poststructuralism” for attempting to displace “the concept of Western civilization...this central and sustaining idea of our educational system and our intellectual heritage.” As Messer-Davidow points out, the impact of Cheney’s critique was particularly powerful given that the NEH, until recently, provided nearly 75% of the funding for humanities scholarships and programmes. During her time as chair of this government agency (a position she held from 1986 to 1993), Cheney and other conservatives on the board actively sought not only to reduce funding to so-called non-traditional areas in the humanities but contributed to the passing of a series of bills (supported by figures like the notorious republican senator Jesse A. Helms) in 1995 in the US House of Representatives that saw funding to both the NEH and the National Endowment for the Arts slashed.

The Cheney incident provides an insight into the kind of political, cultural and economic climate in which cultural studies emerged in the eighties, to reiterate MacCabe’s claim, as “the most active and vigorous element within American humanities and social science programmes.” The irony here is that while, as Peter Gibian points out, the US academy was being “disciplined” in a number of ways, (not only in terms of the aforementioned cuts to university funding and the wide media coverage of right wing attacks on “cultural relativism” within the university, but also in relation to rapid increases in tuition fees, the rolling back of

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235 Lipsitz 630-631.
237 Quoted in Messer-Davidow 490.
238 Messer-Davidow 491.
affirmative action policies, and the increasing ghettoisation of “minorities” within the academic system), the field of cultural studies, perhaps the most anti and trans-disciplinary of intellectual movements, began to flourish within a number of sites within the American academy.

This “naming” of cultural studies as a new and radical field of knowledge at a time when leftist intellectuals were increasingly under attack has been interpreted in a number of ways by progressive intellectuals. As I suggested in my introduction to this chapter, the perceived academic institutionalisation of cultural studies in the United States in the eighties and nineties has produced strong critical reactions from some quarters. In particular, this criticism has revolved around the way in which British cultural studies has been exported into the highly bureaucratised and professionalised culture of US academic life. In the main, this commentary on the emergence of cultural studies in the United States has tended to privilege the Birmingham School model of intellectual work as representing the authentic approach to cultural studies. Thus, the highly specialised and individualised academic context in which cultural studies operates in the United States is measured against the anti-institutional, collectivist ethos of the CCCS, a project whose roots as discussed in part one of my thesis, can be traced to labourite politics and worker education programmes. Not surprisingly, when compared with its British counterpart, American cultural studies is often found wanting with many commentators equating the Americanisation of cultural studies with a retreat from politics.

A common theme in such critiques is the claim that, within the context of the American academy, cultural studies is treated merely as the latest trend in theory. As Alan O’Connor argues in a discussion of Lawrence Grossberg’s work, for example, Grossberg’s rejection of a “unified theory of culture” in favour of a contextualist, “bricolage” approach reflects the fact that in the United States “cultural studies has become synonymous with various types of postmodern theorizing.” For theorists like O’Connor the emergence of a form of cultural

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239 Messer-Davidow 510.
241 See in particular, Alan O’Connor, “The Problem of American Cultural Studies,” What is Cultural Studies? 187-196. For a more nuanced account of the translation of cultural studies into the US academy see Joel Pfister’s “The Americanization of Cultural Studies” in the same collection of essays. To Pfister’s credit, he raises the possibility “that British cultural studies, faced with grim prospects for social change, has romanticised its own interventionist practices, capabilities, and concrete social achievements.” 296.
studies devoid of class or labour analysis at a time of increasing political conservatism indicates that radical intellectuals in the academy have substituted theoretical critique for political action.

A number of critics, however, have sought to understand the translation of British cultural studies into a very different American context in terms of a redefinition or rearticulation—rather than an evacuation—of politics. John Fiske argues that the key developmental difference between British and American cultural studies is the fact that British cultural studies has been centrally concerned with issues of class struggle and has been strongly influenced by Marxist forms of analysis. In contrast, the American polity’s “major concern has been to forge a national unity or consensus out of widely differing immigrant, enslaved, and native social groups.”

That is, lacking the kind of politicised class and labour history that defined the Birmingham project, American cultural studies has tended to draw upon a liberal pluralist conception of society. However, he argues that, in contrast to the gains made by oppressed groups in the sixties and seventies, the devastating legacy of social inequity that accompanied the rise of Reaganism has placed into question the viability of a liberal, social consensus model and has opened the way for an increased interest in aspects of the Birmingham School approach. In particular, he contends that “British cultural studies, with its focus on struggle and its commitment to promoting the interests of the subordinate and critiquing the operations of the dominant, seemed to be tailor made for importation.”

Steven Seidman also seeks to locate the rise of cultural studies within the context of a broader understanding of the politics of the cultural left in America. However, while Seidman’s construction of the American left as an historical formation is one in which, like Fiske, liberalism has played a dominant role, he argues that Marxism has also exerted some (albeit fairly weak) influence within American cultural criticism. Thus, for Seidman, the Marxist roots of the “Birmingham school” can be seen as resonating with, and reactivating, the residual Marxist concerns of progressive American intellectuals. Thus, while he agrees with those critics that have argued that “American cultural studies has been characterized by a strong move towards textualizing the social,” he contends that this conservative strain has

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244 Fiske, “British Cultural Studies and Television,” 144.
been kept in check by an ongoing commitment within leftist cultural criticism to Marxism, even if this has occurred primarily at a rhetorical level. For Seidman, then, one way of narrativising the rise of cultural studies in the United States in the eighties is to argue that the fragmentation of the left in the seventies and eighties into a variety of identity-based communities sowed the seeds for its positive reception within progressive sectors of the academy. For a leftist intellectual culture under siege, it seems that cultural studies offered “the hope that it might serve as something of a common critical approach, uniting into a progressive block a fractured left and a left divided between the defenders of a neomarxist socialist politic and advocates of a postmarxist identity-based politic.”

Seidman and Fiske’s interpretations of the rise of cultural studies problematise the commonly held view that American cultural studies has been marked by a flight from politics, indicating instead a revival of some kind of leftist coalition politics. Furthermore, their analyses put into question the assumption underpinning numerous critiques of American cultural studies that the academy is somehow distanced from the world of *realpolitik*. Support for this view has been voiced, somewhat surprisingly, by the American Marxist Fredric Jameson. In his review article on the 1990 cultural studies conference in Illinois, he notes that in the United States where the project of cultural studies is academically based and where the academy is a highly stratified, professionalised component of the culture industry “[t]he politics in such a project are, to be sure, ‘academic’ politics, the politics within the university, and, beyond it, in intellectual life in general, or in the space of intellectuals as such.” However, rather than taking the now conventional line that an academically based cultural studies involves a retreat from the “real” world of politics “out there,” Jameson emphasises the centrality of the institutional politics of universities to the broader cultural struggle between neoconservatism and the left. As Jameson states, now that the New Right “has begun to develop its own cultural politics, focused on the reconquest of the academic institutions, and in particular of the foundations and the universities themselves, it does not seem wise to go on thinking of academic politics, and the politics of intellectuals, as a particularly ‘academic’ matter.”

For Fiske, Seidman and Jameson, the emergence of a specifically American version of cultural studies can only be understood through a conjunctural analysis of the political, social

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246 Seidman 41.
247 Jameson 17.
248 Jameson 17.
and institutional spaces in which the American cultural left operate. Thus, rather than
privileging the Birmingham School approach as representing the authentic cultural studies
project, the politics of American cultural studies needs to be understood on its own terms. In
particular, I want to suggest in this chapter that the anti-institutional and anti-academic
rhetoric that circulates within much British (and also at times American) cultural studies
scholarship is of little relevance to an American setting where the culture wars are being
fought out in academic institutions and where the intellectual left has become largely
professionalised. Of course such processes are also occurring in other Western countries
such as Britain, explaining in part some of the projected anxieties of British cultural studies
intellectuals. Thus, my discussion of the institutional practices of American cultural studies
intellectuals serves another purpose and that is to problematise the notion that cultural studies
in general should be held up as a site of essentially anti-institutional practices.

The two cultural studies theorists that I discuss in this chapter are particularly relevant
because they are both successful academics based at prestigious universities who have
negotiated a space within the US academy to do progressive cultural studies work. At the
same time both intellectuals perform their cultural politics in rather different ways. Ross is
very much a member of the professionalised intellectual left, moving easily between
institutional sites such as the university, the music industry, and the union movement, and
between more traditional leftist (labour and class politics) and new left (race, sexuality)
political platforms. Grossberg, in contrast, is a fully academicised intellectual working to
maintain a space for cultural studies within a besieged US academy while remaining
primarily concerned with the progressive political and pedagogical possibilities of cultural
studies work within the university system.

In the next section, then, I look more closely at the university as one of the preeminent sites
associated with the rise of cultural studies in the US. In particular, I examine the role of the
different disciplinary sites in which cultural studies has variously struggled and flourished.
As I argue later in this chapter, some of these disciplinary locations are important sites for
contemplating a genealogy of American cultural studies that draws not only on British
cultural studies (as well as other sites such as Canada and Australia), but articulates with
American intellectual, cultural and political movements. More specifically, my discussion of
the disciplinary trajectories of Ross and Grossberg draws attention to the intersecting
genealogies of American studies and communications respectively and the role played by these disciplinary formations within a broader left culturalist tradition of American thought. Initially, however, I want to focus on disciplinarity as a marker of difference within American cultural studies and to argue against seeing cultural studies in the United States as a coherent uniform project but rather as a set of distinct but intersecting streams of thought within the academy.

ii. The Problem of American Cultural Studies

Before I go on to discuss the issue of disciplinarity, however, I need to problematise the label “American cultural studies” and to state that I am using it here as a term of convenience as much as a descriptor of a coherent project or movement. The terms “cultural studies” and “American cultural studies,” terms which, as Jon Stratton and Ien Ang demonstrate in their critique of the universalising impulse underpinning the publication of the Grossberg/Treichler/ Nelson collection Cultural Studies, are increasingly conflated, have become frequently used buzzwords within US intellectual culture. However, as is often the case with buzzwords, the more such terms circulate the more indeterminate their meanings tend to become. As Jameson points out, for the American Right the term “cultural studies” is now used as a catch-phrase for the “politically correct” identity politics of leftist intellectuals. Meanwhile, within the American publishing industry, cultural studies is treated as something of an intellectual fetish and is increasingly used to sell texts in areas unrelated to what many would traditionally include under this umbrella term. For example, one major bookshop manager in the United States recently admitted to reclassifying hard-to-sell sociology texts under cultural studies, a strategy that saw these texts sell four times as well as they had in the sociology section.

Books like Neil Campbell and Alasdair Kean’s American Cultural Studies: An Introduction to American Culture, an undergraduate introduction to the field of American studies

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249 As they argue, “[t]he fact that this American-dominated representation of ‘cultural studies’ could present itself so confidently as cultural studies per se is just one illustration of how hegemony derives its effectivity from a self-presentation as universal, one that does not acknowledge its own particularity.” Stratton and Ang, “On the Impossibility of a Global Cultural Studies,” 364.
250 Jameson 17.
which, despite its title, spends very little time discussing or attempting to define cultural studies, are a symptom of this commodification process. Indeed, publishing firms like Routledge have played such a leading role in marketing cultural studies in the United States that a recent article in Lingua Franca described Bill Germano, Routledge’s editorial director, as “the Bill Gates of Cultural Studies.” As previously mentioned, it was Routledge, for example, that put out Cultural Studies in 1992, a book that has played a pivotal role in popularising the term “cultural studies” within the public sphere and that, at the time, signalled cultural studies’ status as the latest intellectual trend within the lucrative American academic market.

The widespread publicity received by cultural studies via the publishing industry has no doubt played an important role in giving cultural studies a sense of coherency and has certainly helped promote its acceptance within certain sectors of the American academy. However, as Lawrence Grossberg has pointed out, its use as an umbrella term for all manner of disciplinary and theoretical movements has been accompanied by an erasure of the specific historical processes that contributed to the formation of cultural studies as a specific intellectual movement. Furthermore, as Stratton and Ang’s anxieties concerning the way the terms cultural studies and American cultural studies are used interchangeably suggest, this lack of specificity can have politically conservative implications when United States based forms of cultural studies are universalised as “international cultural studies.”

In this chapter I use the term American cultural studies as a way of mitigating against some of these problems. While I see the American cultural studies movement as far from coherent, I use the term “American cultural studies” in order to distinguish it from the specific historical formation that is British cultural studies. At the same time, the term “American cultural studies” represents an attempt to ground the American cultural studies movement in its own diverse but nationally specific history. However, I emphasise the American-ness of American cultural studies here also as a measure against the universalising tendency within British cultural studies. As I have discussed there is a tendency to privilege the Birmingham School as the originary blueprint for the development of cultural studies in the United States so that American cultural studies is seen to suddenly emerge in the eighties with the export of

British cultural theory to the American academy. Richard Ohmann, commenting in his essay “Thoughts on Cultural Studies in the United States” on the founding fathers, texts and sites of British cultural studies (marked by the Hoggart, Williams, and Thompson triad, and the role of the CCCS and Stuart Hall), argues that in the process of constructing a genealogy of US cultural studies “we can’t just write them into our CS formation as prophets, holy city, and messiah, because the driving energies of CS here come from our own political and intellectual past.”

Like Ohmann then, my emphasis on American cultural studies as a distinctly American intellectual formation reflects my focus on the need to understand the emergence of cultural studies in this country in relation to the traditions of cultural critique already present within the American academy.

At the same time, I acknowledge Stratton and Ang’s critique of those specifying discourses that end up privileging the nation state as the marker of difference within cultural studies. Thus, the “America” that I use here as a limit term for cultural studies is self-consciously shifting and constructed and is, like cultural studies itself, a fragmented and contested site. I recognise, as per José Saldívar’s cultural studies analysis of Chinano/a literature and his discussion of the United States-Mexico border zone, that the borders of this national site are permeable; and that, in the face of the rise of Latin American and “Americas” cultural studies, the “American” in American cultural studies is an increasingly contested term. Furthermore, I think Paul Gilroy’s critique of nationalism and his notion of the Black Atlantic is useful in terms of understanding the ways in which intellectual formations such as Black or Afro-American studies, a field which has played an important role in the formation of American cultural studies, have been moulded by both national and transnational influences. Nevertheless I want to argue in this chapter that the national, however contested a category, is a central analytic tool for understanding the rise and development of cultural studies. My aim is therefore to contribute to what Grossberg has named “the

256 Ohmann 12.
258 José David Saldívar, Border Matters: Remapping American Cultural Studies (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).
impossible but necessary task of narrating the history...of cultural studies in the U.S.,”
however fractured and contingent that history might be.

### iii. Disciplining American Cultural Studies

The most useful point of entry into such a history is one that focuses on cultural studies’ location within and in relation to academic disciplines. This may seem a somewhat perverse route to take given that cultural studies is often associated with an anti-disciplinary approach to knowledge practices; however, in the United States, as Jameson has suggested, “one of the crucial ways in which Cultural Studies continues to define itself turns on its relationship to the established disciplines.”

And, as Ted Striphas has noted in his recent discussion of the institutionalisation of cultural studies, “specific institutionalizations of cultural studies tend to evince a consistently interdisciplinary, as opposed to an anti-disciplinary orientation.”

While British cultural studies, at least in its early years, had an openly fraught relationship with disciplinary forms of knowledge and existed, rather precariously at times, on the margins of university life, as Herman Gray argues, from the outset cultural studies’ “migration to the American academy has, in part, been made possible and realized by its effective incorporation into the existing disciplinary boundaries and professional imperatives of the American university.”

For American cultural studies this relationship with other disciplines has not only been marked by a significant degree of methodological and epistemological exchange at a theoretical level but has also been characterised by an essentially symbiotic institutional relationship. While there are some prominent cultural studies programmes and centres in the US academy (for example, the Centre for Cultural Studies at Santa Cruz), cultural studies practitioners often find themselves located within more traditional academic departments.

A number of practitioners operate across two or three disciplines and/or institutions, for example, Paula Treichler, the co-author with Grossberg and Nelson of Cultural Studies, holds concurrent appointments in a College of Medicine, a Communications Research Institute and

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261 Lawrence Grossberg, “Toward a Genealogy of the State of Cultural Studies,” *Disciplinarity and Dissent in Cultural Studies* 133.
262 Jameson 18.
a Department of Women’s Studies. Regardless of their specific location, however, what
binds these cultural studies practitioners together is the integral role that disciplinary
formations play in their working lives and intellectual careers.

Thus, as I have noted, unlike British cultural studies which has tended to define itself against
or outside the logic of disciplinarity, American cultural studies—faced with a highly
professionalised and academicised intellectual culture—has had a more pragmatic and openly
engaged relationship with mainstream academic disciplines. One of the questions I am
therefore interested in asking in relation to the intellectual practices of American cultural
studies theorists, is how and in what ways their cultural studies work is impacted on by
institutional and professional pressures. Rather than employing the anti-institutional
vocabulary of the Birmingham School, I want to raise issues that are arguably more relevant
to an American cultural studies seeking to gain an institutional foothold within a politically
contested academic landscape. Given the impact that the boundaries and configurations of
academic disciplines have played in this struggle, this chapter examines some of the
disciplinary locations and genealogies of cultural studies. Rather than viewing cultural
studies’ various engagements with disciplinarity as constraining, it addresses the ways in
which these disciplinary encounters have offered productive possibilities for doing cultural
studies within the US academy. Furthermore, by focusing on specific encounters between
cultural studies and the rather contrasting disciplinary structures of English, American studies
and communications I want to place into question the uniformity of US disciplines and to
suggest that a diversity of intellectual practices have been produced at the intersection
between US cultural studies and its various disciplinary “homes.”

To conclude this discussion of the contemporary context in which cultural studies emerged in
the eighties in the US, I want to now turn to a discussion of one of the major disciplines
associated with its rapid rise, that is English or literary studies, a field that is seen as
especially prone to the depoliticising forces of academicisation and professionalisation. I
want to suggest that the reasons for cultural studies’ appropriation by US English
departments are more complex than they at first appear and that the merger of cultural and
literary studies has produced both conservative and progressive modes of intellectual
practice.

265 Seidman 38.
iv. The Discipline of English and the Textualisation of Cultural Studies

Recent British commentary on the rise of cultural studies in the United States suggests that the American academy has bred a particularly narrow version of cultural studies. For example, Angela McRobbie has argued that despite its gestures towards ethnography American cultural studies offers little more than the latest version of textual analysis, while David Morley states that “in the context of the North American academy, cultural studies has become almost synonymous with a certain kind of postmodern deconstructionist literary theory.” While these assessments of American cultural studies demonstrate a certain reductionism in the face of a rather more pluralistic cultural studies scene (and tend to omit discussions of the textualisation of cultural studies within the British literary academy), there is general agreement among both British and American critics that the rise of cultural studies in the United States in the eighties has been, in part, associated with its institutionalisation within English and literary studies departments and therefore has produced a fairly narrowly defined set of theoretical concerns.

As David Glover and Cora Kaplan have argued, as “the most densely populated disciplinary area within the [American] academy” it is perhaps inevitable that the discipline of English has a powerful influence on any new intellectual agenda within the humanities. Certainly, a cursory survey of internationally recognised American cultural studies publications such as Grossberg, Treichler and Nelson’s *Cultural Studies* volume and the journal *Social Text* indicate that by far the largest number of contributors to these publications are located within English or literature departments. Furthermore, the fact that the first international conference to be held under the banner “American cultural studies” (at the University of Tulsa in 1999) was based in the Faculty of English, and was the University’s Thirteenth

269 In relation to *Cultural Studies*, note that out of the 44 contributors (including the editors) 28 were US based at the time of publication, with 11 of those being located in English departments. The second disciplinary runner-up (with 4 contributors) was communications. For a survey of the disciplinary location of contributors to *Social Text* and other cultural studies journals during the period from 1990 to 1995 see Virginia R. Dominguez, “Disciplining Anthropology,” *Disciplinarity and Dissent in Cultural Studies* 37-61.
Annual Comparative Literature Symposium, seems to support the claim made by many critics that, in the United States, cultural studies has become a branch of literary theory.\textsuperscript{270}

Sheer numerical and economic strength, as well as the power of its professional body, the highly influential MLA, which in its 1992 report included cultural studies as a literary research category,\textsuperscript{271} explains at least in part why English has played such a major role in the recent “cultural turn” within humanities departments in the United States. What this doesn’t account for, however, is the issue of how and why cultural studies was picked up in English departments specifically in the eighties. While I’ve discussed the broader political and cultural context in which cultural studies emerged as a pivotal new player in the humanities at that time, the question remains as to how these pressures were played out in relation to the specific disciplinary and theoretical concerns of English departments. As Glover and Kaplan have argued, understanding the ways in which British cultural studies inserted itself into the American academy involves recognising the fact that American cultural theory pre-Birmingham was not a blank slate.\textsuperscript{272} The particular strands of British cultural studies work that were imported to the US thus variously intersected, negotiated and clashed with a number of preexisting fields whose interests crossed those of cultural studies, such as American studies, communications, black studies, feminist studies, education, anthropology and sociology. Furthermore, cultural studies arrived in the US at a time when “the many refurbished literature departments [were] still reeling under the impact of the various poststructuralisms.”\textsuperscript{273}

A number of critical analyses of the perceived takeover of cultural studies by English departments focus on the engagement between cultural studies and poststructuralism as representing a formative moment for American cultural studies.\textsuperscript{274} However, for figures like

\textsuperscript{270}This claim is reinforced by the increasingly common inclusion of chapters on cultural studies in introductory literary studies texts and readers. See, for example, chapter seven in Wilfred L.Guerin, Earle Labor, Lee Morgan, Jeanne C. Reesman and John R. Willingham, \textit{A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature} (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999). In this particular text, cultural studies is treated as an umbrella term for such disparate approaches as “British Cultural Materialism,” “The New Historicism,” and “American Multiculturalism.”


\textsuperscript{272}Glover and Kaplan 222.

\textsuperscript{273}Glover and Kaplan 222.

\textsuperscript{274}Indeed, in Ben Agger’s commentary on the way in which cultural studies has been institutionalised within the academy he labels the cultural studies work carried out in American literary departments as a “sort of
Cary Nelson, whose disciplinary roots are in English, the dialogue between cultural studies and a distinctly American form of literary deconstruction has not always been a productive or critical one. Rather, this encounter has tended to reproduce a reductive, academicist focus on textuality thus depoliticising a cultural studies project whose roots were born out of class consciousness and a scepticism towards academic institutions and disciplines. Commenting in his essay “Always Already Cultural Studies: Academic Conferences and Manifestos” on a recent cultural studies conference opened by J. Hillis Miller (a figure who, as Nelson points out, played an important role in depoliticising French deconstruction when it was imported to the American academy), he notes that Miller’s take on cultural studies demonstrates little sense of its historical roots. For Nelson, Miller offers an essentially liberal reconstruction of a once radical cultural studies project thereby allowing its easy assimilation into English studies. Thus, his speech offers an insight into the way in which “cultural studies is often for English studies in the United States little more than a way of repackaging what we were already doing.”

Likewise, Colin MacCabe argues that cultural studies’ reception within English departments was preconditioned by its engagement with the specifically de Manian brand of deconstructionism that flourished in English departments at the time. In the process of being exported to the American academy, French theory, MacCabe argues, came to serve a neo-romantic agenda in which, rather than questioning the high cultural foundations of English studies, literature continued to be privileged over new cultural forms. Surprisingly, then, and for complex reasons, he argues that in the late eighties “[t]he dominance of theory in America gave way to an increasing interest in cultural studies.” In particular, the rise of identity politics within the academy presented a radical challenge to existing literary theoretical paradigms. While class and gender based critiques of the defining texts of the literary canon had forced a shift towards a broader, more inclusive definition of literary value, MacCabe argues that it was the more radical challenge posed by black studies that forced a shift within English departments towards broader cultural concerns. In particular, the assertion by black students of the value of studying alternate cultural traditions to that of Americanized poststructuralism.” See Ben Agger, Cultural Studies as Critical Theory (London: Falmer Press, 1992) 2.

275 Nelson 274. Ironically, given its vehement critique of the colonising impulses of English studies, this essay was first published in The Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association in a special edition on cultural studies.

276 MacCabe 30-31.
literature, such as black music, represented a potential crisis of authority for English departments. As MacCabe notes, for English departments, cultural studies “with its commitment to an ethnography of popular cultures” seemed to offer a timely solution to this crisis.\(^{278}\)

While Nelson argues that in the process of its appropriation by English departments cultural studies was reduced to yet another version of literary deconstructionism, MacCabe suggests instead that cultural studies in the United States has been positioned “as the academic equivalent of identity politics.”\(^{279}\) Whatever theoretical guise cultural studies has taken during its encounters with English departments, Glover and Kaplan contend that, generally, the relative disciplinary power of English, has meant that cultural studies has been rendered “a very silent partner” in these exchanges.\(^{280}\) There is a sense, then, that in the process of this exchange English has tended to expand its disciplinary territory to include cultural studies as yet another useful theoretical paradigm rather than self-consciously examining its own core epistemic and disciplinary concerns.

An example of the uneven nature of cultural studies’ engagement with English and literary studies in the United States can be found in Marjorie Garber’s essay on the battle over the term “culture.”\(^{281}\) After briefly discussing various definitions of the term “culture” (with little mention of those debates within contemporary British cultural studies apart from a brief reference to Raymond William’s *Keywords*), Garber notes that the Centre for Literary Studies at Harvard University changed its name in 1988 to the Centre for Literary and Cultural Studies in order to reflect the diversity of work being done there. For Garber (who, as well as holding the position of professor of English, is the director of the Centre), that diversity was marked by the fact that the Centre’s work included such topics as “Eighteenth Century Literature and Culture,” “American Literature in International Perspective,” and “Cross Cultural Poetics and Rhetoric.”\(^{282}\) Somewhat surprisingly—given that her own work has pushed the boundaries of conventional literary studies—Garber here reinscribes the uneven relations of disciplinary power between English and cultural studies. The shift here from

\(^{277}\) MacCabe 32.  
\(^{278}\) MacCabe 33.  
\(^{279}\) MacCabe 33.  
\(^{280}\) Glover and Kaplan 223.  
“literary studies” to “literary and cultural studies” reflects little more than an expansion of literary studies’ disciplinary purview (marked by the phrase “diversity”), while cultural studies is in effect reduced to being a subset of literary studies. Furthermore, Garber’s response in her essay to the argument that the pairing of literary studies with cultural critique might be oxymoronic, leaves us in little doubt as to which term is being privileged in the phrase literary and cultural Studies, suggesting as she does that “[t]he best [cultural] critics, and certainly the best teachers, are and always have been those who love literature.”

This rather expansionist approach, along with the narrow definition of cultural studies that accompanies it, is I would argue one that dominates literary studies accounts of the impact and ongoing role of cultural theory in English departments. In contrast, the literary theorist Patrick Brantlinger, in his widely read account of the development of British and American cultural studies, Crusoe’s Footprints, appears to offer a more thoughtful and balanced account of the critical possibilities that cultural studies might offer the discipline of English. Unlike other literary-oriented accounts where cultural studies tends to be treated as a free-floating theoretical paradigm, Brantlinger frames his discussion with an analysis of cultural studies as an historically specific intellectual movement that emerged out of the CCCS. Likewise, in his discussion of the crisis of education that has impacted on the American academy, he also attempts to historicise the rise of American cultural studies and to locate its impact within an increasingly instrumentalist academic culture.

Despite this broad-based and historically contextualised account, however, Brantlinger’s vision of where cultural studies might intervene in this instrumentalist culture reveals his concerns to be not that dissimilar from the kind of liberal, literary-based agenda offered by a figure like J. Hillis Miller. For example, in relation to an increasingly vocationally-oriented university system, Brantlinger sees cultural studies as supporting the role of literary studies by offering a critical humanistic alternative to bureaucratic rationality. At the same time, at a theoretical level, Brantlinger’s framing of the cultural studies project within a narrowly literary and textual paradigm indicates that he sees the methodological approaches of cultural studies as once again supplementing, rather than supplanting, those of literary studies. Thus,

282 Garber 27.
283 Garber 32.
“cultural studies becomes necessary to show us how to teach the cultural text,” where “culture means both literature and politics.”

In his critique of Brantlinger, Joel Pfister argues that Crusoe’s Footprints can be read “as a symptom of how cultural studies may be ‘Americanized’ as it is absorbed into the American academy. Echoing Nelson’s critique of Miller, Pfister observes that despite some affinities with the project of British cultural studies, Brantlinger’s book is essentially “a liberal packaging” of cultural studies. In particular, Pfister argues that despite Brantlinger’s critical social concerns with issues like multiculturalism, his tendency to deal with these issues purely at the level of textuality and representation—rather than offering a more social structural critique—essentially marks him out as a “literary culturalist.” While Pfister’s critique relies excessively on privileging British cultural studies as the model of cultural practice, and is therefore unable to analyse Brantlinger’s Americanisation of cultural studies as a pragmatic response to the very different political and institutional conditions in which US intellectuals must operate, his concerns regarding the excessively literary focus of Brantlinger’s analysis are well founded. For Brantlinger’s account of the development of cultural studies in Britain and America is not so much about the Americanisation of cultural studies in the sense of offering a broad analysis of the development of cultural theory in the American academy as it is an account of its disciplinisation within the context of US literary studies.

The image of American cultural studies as predominantly textualist or as just another name for the latest trend in literary theory is a mark, then, of the relative disciplinary power of English and literary studies within the US academy where, as I have shown, American cultural studies is often conflated with literary studies. At the same time I would suggest, however, that the pivotal genealogical relations between American cultural studies and a number of other disciplines complicate this assumption. Returning to the central image of Brantlinger’s book, that of Crusoe’s footprints on the beach and his reading of those footprints as a literal marker of “otherness,” I would argue that literary studies-based accounts such as Brantlinger’s need to take into consideration the role that their disciplinary others have played in terms of paving the way for the development of cultural theory in the

285 Brantlinger 21.
286 Pfister 293.
287 Pfister 294-295.
US academy. While English departments in the eighties performed an important role in providing cultural studies with a degree of institutional legitimation within the academy, it is important to acknowledge that the foundations of an American cultural studies formation had been laid largely by other disciplinary players, disciplines that continue to support a diversity of contemporary cultural studies approaches. In this next section, then, I want to follow in the genealogical footsteps of two of the more significant disciplinary influences on American cultural studies, namely American studies and communications. Rather than just providing an abstract developmental history of these two fields, however, my discussion attempts to link these two disciplinary narratives with contemporary intellectual practices within cultural studies. Thus, my discussion of the development of American studies and communications respectively is framed by a brief account of Andrew Ross and Lawrence Grossberg’s intellectual encounters with these two disciplinary sites.

II. TOWARDS AN AMERICAN GENEALOGY OF CULTURAL STUDIES

i. Andrew Ross: Disciplinarity and Dissent: From Literary to Popular Culture

Andrew Ross’ career within the American university system provides some insights into the ways in which cultural studies practitioners have negotiated a path through an academic world that is highly professionalised and disciplinised. As I have noted, despite claims that cultural studies has attained institutional legitimacy in the US academy, there are still a dearth of cultural studies programmes or departments in American universities. As a result, cultural studies theorists like Ross have tended to work out of other disciplinary fields and have often built their academic reputations within fairly traditional disciplinary territory. Thus, in Ross’ case his disciplinary background was in English and American literature—he moved from the UK to the United States to study and research American poetry and his first book The Failure of Modernism: Symptoms of American Poetry was an examination of the discourses of modernity within American modernist poetry.

Discussing the relations between the disciplinary training of American academics and their subsequent area of research, not surprisingly Nelson and Gaonkar cite Ross (and Constance

This phrase is taken from the title of Nelson and Gaonkar’s book Disciplinarity and Dissent in Cultural Studies.
Penley) as figures whose disciplinary credentials seem very distant from the kind of scholarship they are currently engaged in, describing them as “permanent and willing disciplinary exiles.” However, I would suggest that Ross (who, while he now directs an American studies programme, also teaches in Comparative Literature) is not so much a disciplinary exile as a disciplinary mediator. For Ross, cultural studies work in an American setting involves not so much a rejection of disciplinarity but rather requires an intimate understanding of the workings of (inter)disciplinary relations and a recognition that interdisciplinary fields must necessarily work within and through disciplinary (and other institutional) structures. This recognition also comes with an understanding that academic authority is often tied to one’s disciplinary genealogy. In a recent letter from Ross to the *PMLA* commenting on the relations between cultural studies and the literary profession, Ross insists that literary studies departments must move beyond a purely literary focus if they are to remain culturally relevant in the face of current debates within the academy over knowledge production. Ironically, what gives Ross the authority to critically contest the role of literary studies in the pages of the MLA’s professional journal is not so much his status as a cultural studies intellectual but rather his literary studies credentials. Ross recognises, then, that in order to be able to utilise the rhetoric of border crossing or disciplinary transgression effectively, one has to first be in possession of the right kind of disciplinary passport.

But what other motivations are there for strategically shifting one’s disciplinary location? I would argue that Ross’ movement between and across disciplines is driven primarily by a concern with producing politically and culturally relevant forms of knowledge. In his second monograph, *No Respect: Intellectuals and Popular Culture* (1989), Ross offers a critical historical account of the relations between intellectuals and popular culture in the United States. Describing the rise of the new social histories and the expansion of the humanities to include popular and minoritarian forms of cultural knowledge, Ross traces the way in which the intellectual’s once “specialist influence over the shaping of ethical knowledge and the education of taste” has become a crucially contested site. In mapping out this shift, Ross provides an ethical, epistemological and political rationale for his own defection from a

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literary studies premised upon a hierarchy of taste cultures to a broader based cultural criticism that aims for an “engaged and ‘respectful’ contestation of popular meanings.”

Ross’ concern with producing a set of cultural studies practices relevant to contemporary American culture, then, has seen him shift his disciplinary location from literary studies to American studies, a field Ross sees as providing him with “the most comfortable academic location” for practising American cultural studies. Certainly, taking up the academic position of the director of American studies at NYU in 1993 (he also had previously directed the American studies programme at Princeton University) has provided Ross with a certain degree of disciplinary latitude. While the programme was once a fairly traditional combination of literary studies and history, Ross and his colleagues have revamped the curriculum so that the programme now brings together a variety of fields from black studies to queer theory to Latino performance studies.

While Ross’ shift to American studies has provided him with an interdisciplinary latitude rarely available in English departments, as I have noted, another major factor contributing to his move away from English was a concern with tapping into a specifically American set of intellectual traditions. As Ross has recently commented, the intellectual circles he had contact with prior to entering American studies tended to be preoccupied with European theory and often ignored their own traditions of American thought. However, Ross’ own work became increasingly grounded in these traditions following his concern with developing cultural studies work relevant to the specific context of American contemporary culture. Ross’ concerns are succinctly voiced in the introduction to No Respect—a book he wrote while he was still based in an English department—when he proclaims the importance for contemporary American cultural criticism to gain a critical understanding of its own historical relation to popular culture.

Such lessons and such a history are essential, right now, to American cultural studies if, having abandoned the prestigious but undemocratic, Europeanized contempt for

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292 Ross, No Respect 210.
293 Andrew Ross. Telephone interview. 14 Sept 1998. Thus, as I mentioned before, while disciplinarity in itself does not exclude the possibility of “doing” cultural studies within the academy (with most cultural studies work being carried out within either an inter or intra-disciplinary structure), it seems that certain disciplinary formations are more conducive to radical cultural studies work than others.
294 Ross. Telephone interview.
“mass culture,” and rejected the more celebratory, native tradition of gee-whizzery, it is now to avoid falling entirely under the sway of the established British tradition of Cultural Studies, which for all its virtues and insights (this book would not have been written without them) has its own national specificity.296

Thus, despite his Scottish ancestry and the fact that in his many and varied publications he tends to either eschew disciplinary links or associates himself with “cultural studies in the broad sense” or with American cultural studies,297 I would argue that Ross’ writings as well as his intellectual practices are best understood as emerging out of (and often self-reflexively commenting on) a complex set of American intellectual traditions of social and cultural criticism, that can be variously pulled together under the general rubric of American studies. In this next section, then, through discussing some of the debates over the origins and development of American studies, I want to provide some insight into the complexity and diversity of the “culturalist” tradition in the United States, as well as the contested arena of present-day cultural studies.

ii. American Studies: The Legacies of Liberalism and American Marxism

While at face value American studies may seem to be a relatively minor institutional player compared with disciplines such as English and literary studies, as I have already discussed, the developmental narrative of American studies constitutes an important if often marginalised genealogy for American cultural studies. Indeed, in an explicit recognition of the intersecting nature of the projects of American studies and American cultural studies, many contemporary American studies scholars are relabelling their work as “American cultural studies” while at the same time there has been a resurgence of interest in reexamining the “culturalist” origins of the field itself.298 In this next section, then, I outline the developmental history of American studies from its emergence as an academic formation in the forties to its recent revitalisation as a site for interdisciplinary US cultural studies research. Like American cultural studies, however, American studies is a field marked by a

295 Ross. Telephone interview.
296 Ross, No Respect 7.
plurality of intellectual practices and political stances. Rather than presenting a univocal narrative of its development, then, I offer a glimpse into the contested nature of its disciplinary politics through a discussion of the debates over its genealogy and its recent apparent turn towards a more explicitly cultural studies approach. Thus, I am interested in examining both the left culturalist (Marxist-inflected) genealogy “inherited” by figures like Ross and Michael Denning, as well as the more liberal pluralist tradition that has, and still for the most part continues, to dominate the American studies “scene.” I would suggest that one of the features that distinguishes American cultural studies from its British counterpart is precisely this mixed political genealogy of both American Marxism and liberalism.

Traditionally, the developmental history of American studies has been seen as a politically conservative one with many perceiving the field primarily as an intellectual by-product of the Cold War. In her presidential address to the American Studies Association in 1995, Elaine Tyler May—attempting to complicate such accounts—argued that while American studies became institutionalised as a discipline during the Cold War (with early American studies programmes being established at Princeton University in 1942 and at the University of Minnesota in 1945), it actually emerged out of the specific historical context of the thirties and its later development can be seen to reflect aspects of this originary moment. As George Lipsitz has commented, American studies’ early development was in fact characterised by a combination of intellectual and political influences including “[e]thnography and folklore studies by New Deal-supported scholars, the ‘cult of the common man’ pushed by Popular Front Marxism, and the use of ‘American Exceptionalism’ to stem the country’s drift toward involvement in World War II.” From the outset, American studies’ various links to liberalism, the Popular Front and discourses of American nationalism paved the way for what was to become an essentially divided field of knowledge. On the one hand, American studies stood as an “embodiment...of the American Way,” receiving corporate funding and acting overseas as “an intellectual arm of United States foreign policy.”

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298 For a snapshot of some of the debates accompanying this recent shift towards cultural studies, see the 1997 summer edition of the journal American Studies, entitled “American Studies: From Culture Concept to Cultural Studies?”
300 Lipsitz 622.
“movement” attracted radical intellectuals interested in critical reconstructions of American cultural history.

Patrick Brantlinger has argued that despite these progressive aspects of its origins and the critical contribution to American studies made by left scholars like F. O. Matthiessen and Kenneth Burke, American studies became increasingly conservative in its outlook following the onset of the Cold War. Thus, while it initially offered an interdisciplinary alternative to the increasing fragmentation and bureaucratisation of higher education in the thirties, forties and fifties, during the period in which a consensus approach to politics came to dominate the American cultural landscape, American studies itself moved towards more unified and “disciplined” models of culture. For example, the “myth and symbol” school that came to dominate American studies fitted easily into a liberal consensus model of social relations. With its focus on the role of national myths in moulding American culture and its concern with holistic models of culture, the myth and symbol school enabled American studies to be appropriated into an essentially conservative, nationalist political agenda. Indeed, as Lawrence Buell points out, its validation of a consensus view of history and American culture subsequently earned it the name “Cold War Criticism.” Furthermore, this shift away from the more pluralistic models of American culture that had circulated in the thirties was accompanied by a narrowing of American studies’ disciplinary concerns with the field increasingly reduced to a combination of literary and historical studies.

Historical accounts of American studies presented by scholars such as Lipsitz, May and Jay Mechling, however, complicate this picture somewhat. Lipsitz argues that even during the Cold War American studies scholars continued to interrogate the socially constructed nature of cultural concepts while he also contends that the myth and symbol scholars were more critical than they have been portrayed. Meanwhile, Mechling claims that while the political climate of the forties and fifties was a conservative one “the American studies ‘movement’ nevertheless practiced a critique of the structures for the creation and reproduction of academic knowledge.” He comments, in particular, on the interdisciplinary work carried out from the fifties onwards at the American Civilization

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302 Brantlinger 27-29.
303 Lawrence Buell, “Are We Post-American studies?,” Field Work 88.
304 Lipsitz 624.
Department at the University of Pennsylvania where scholars attempted to forge links between American studies, anthropology and the social sciences. Furthermore, May argues that while American studies was certainly not immune to the prevailing “consensus ideology” that characterised Cold War politics, “the field remained a much more open arena wherein dissident scholars could find a comfortable intellectual as well as institutional home.”

Despite their revisionist accounts of American studies’ Cold War years, however, both May and Lipsitz agree, along with most other American studies scholars, that the radicalism that marked the early development of the discipline was, to a significant degree, stifled by the conservative climate of US culture in the 1950s. Accordingly, looking back to the 1930s and 1940s when Front-affiliated, African-American writers like Ralph Ellison and Chester Himes were making important connections in their work between politics and popular culture, and when the early issues of American Quarterly dealt in a “broadminded and sophisticated fashion” with a variety of issues related to cultural production from popular music to “subcultural practice,” Lipsitz admits that American studies had become relatively more conservative and narrow in its focus. Thus, rather than developing further the kind of grounded and contextualist approaches to popular culture that characterised these early contributions to American studies scholarship, the discipline moved towards “more monolithic and less plural” representations of American culture. As May notes, while many of the more critical American studies scholars were aware of the conservative aspects of the “myth and symbol” school and were troubled by the narrowness of the Anglo-Saxon tradition of American culture, “[t]hey failed to recognize any other sources of American social, cultural and political life” such as women and racial and ethnic minorities.

During the sixties and seventies, however, American studies found itself operating in a political and cultural context where its nationalist focus and its tendency towards narrow and exclusionary models of culture was increasingly challenged. The impact of critical theory on

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306 Mechling 11.
307 May 187.
308 Lipsitz 624.
309 Lipsitz 625.
310 Lipsitz 625.
311 May 188.
the academy, as well as the broader consequences of the anti-Vietnam war movement and the rise of the Civil Rights movement, led to increasing criticism of what was perceived to be the monolithic, exclusionary nature of the versions of American history associated with the myth and symbol school. As Buell points out, both feminist and African-American scholars challenged the reductive conception of American culture that underpinned much American studies work, arguing that its emphasis on a coherent American national identity erased the diversity and difference that characterised life in a pluralistic, multicultural society. The subsequent challenge posed by African diaspora studies, Asian-American studies and Latino studies further placed into question the consensus model of nationhood and thus opened the way for a more critical cultural studies approach to American culture.312

This narrative of an essentially conservative field that has only recently started to move towards more radical accounts of US culture has, however, been challenged by American studies theorist Michael Denning in his 1996 book *The Cultural Front*. Like Lipsitz and May, Denning is concerned to provide a revisionist account of American studies by emphasising its radical roots in the Popular Front politics of the thirties and forties. However, Denning’s revisionist approach makes a further break with traditional historiographies of American culturalism in his suggestion that the legacy of the early Popular Front continued to make its presence felt through the fifties, paving the way for “a new ‘cultural turn’ in left-wing theory and practice”313 in late fifties America as well as the massive student movements and cultural upheavals that marked America in the sixties. Furthermore, Denning’s re-reading of American studies’ genealogical roots suggests that the recent rise of cultural studies in the US is not a new phenomenon but rather was anticipated by the broad culturalist concerns that accompanied the Popular Front movement, hence the title of his book. Thus, for Denning, the American academy’s recent embrace of the work of British cultural studies practitioners represents more than just a literary theoretical exercise. Rather, he contends that this interest in cultural studies can be seen as articulating with a broader trend within American culture witnessed by “the reappearance of a leftist social-democratic conception of culture and cultural democracy.”314

312 Buell 87-88.
Central to Denning’s argument here is his contention that this revitalised leftist cultural movement has its origins in the politics of the Popular Front and, while it has waxed and waned over the years, the progressive intellectual culture that emerged out of that period, continues to represent a significant critical tradition within American thought. While not wanting to suggest that the United States had developed a fully formed cultural studies movement of its own in the thirties, Denning does argue for the need to reassess the role played by the intellectual work of Popular Front intellectuals in contributing to the reception and subsequent emergence of such a movement in the United States. Claiming that the early work of Popular Front intellectuals on popular culture, race and ethnicity, issues of nationhood and cultural theory foreshadowed some of the current concerns of American cultural studies theorists (as well as deeply influencing post-war American studies), Denning presses for a revaluation of the distinctly culturalist legacy of the Popular Front.\textsuperscript{315}

Accordingly, then, Denning revisits the work of a series of Front-affiliated intellectuals in \textit{The Cultural Front} in order to highlight the their early culturalist concerns: these include Sydney Hook and Max Eastman who Americanised Marxism by combining it with pragmatism;\textsuperscript{316} Kenneth Burke whose communications-oriented work on symbolic action has been marked by a recent revival of interest within contemporary cultural studies;\textsuperscript{317} Louis Adamic and Carey McWilliams who made a significant if largely unrecognised contribution to culturalist debates over race and ethnicity;\textsuperscript{318} and lastly, fashion designer Elizabeth Hawes and jazz critic Sidney Finkelstein, whose “complex engagement with the popular and vernacular arts [remains according to Denning] one of the enduring legacies of Popular Front cultural criticism.”\textsuperscript{319} After discussing in depth the contribution made by these figures to the broader culturalist turn in the US in the thirties and forties and examining the ways in which their work anticipated contemporary concerns, Denning concludes that the work of these figures “remain powerful contributions to any emancipatory cultural studies.”\textsuperscript{320}

While Denning’s reconsideration of the role of the Popular Front represents an important contribution to a history of American cultural inquiry, in attempting to debunk some of the

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\textsuperscript{316} Denning, \textit{The Cultural Front} 425.
\textsuperscript{318} Denning, \textit{The Cultural Front} 445.
\textsuperscript{319} Denning, \textit{The Cultural Front} 454-455.
\textsuperscript{320} Denning, \textit{The Cultural Front} 425.
mainstream accounts of the early cultural left Denning is sometimes overgenerous in his depiction of the cultural politics of the Front. For instance, Andrew Ross’ discussion of the relations between intellectuals and mass culture in the thirties suggests that while various Progressive thinkers who played an influential role on the Front—like the American pragmatist, John Dewey and the Chicago School sociologist, Robert Park—had “viewed the new mass cultural technologies as the basis for a new rational, communitarian, social order,” by the mid-thirties this kind of “populist optimism” with regards the possibilities of mass media had disappeared. 321 Instead, Ross argues that Popular Front intellectuals strove to offer “the masses an alternative folk culture [in the face of] what was seen as the debilitating political effects of commercial popular culture.”322 Ross suggests instead that it was a strand of liberal thought, in particular David Riesman’s work in the early fifties on the role of the audience in the consumption of what Riesman termed “class-mass culture” that “helped to prise open a gap between what would be thought of as the mass production of culture and the popular nature of its reception and uses by consumers.”323

Thus, while Denning’s discussion of the specific work of figures like Hawes and Finkelstein suggests that some Front figures were attempting to engage critically with commercial culture, Ross’ analysis emphasises the complex and often contradictory relationship between leftist intellectuals and the realm of popular culture, arguing that many leftists were fearful of what they saw as mass culture’s fascist connotations. Despite these criticisms, Denning’s discussion of the impact of socialist thought on American culture represents an important challenge to the traditional historiography of American cultural studies, while his detailed discussions of, for example, the role of pragmatism in the development of American Marxism, provides us with a deeper and more complex insight into the distinctive genealogy of American cultural studies. Furthermore, he has highlighted a long and often forgotten tradition of what Cornel West has termed “left cultural reflection” in the United States, a tradition that according to West runs from the late nineteenth century “cultural politics” of the American pragmatist John Dewey to the American Marxists who sought “to create their own left American cultural studies in the thirties and forties.” 324

321 Ross, No Respect 239n.
322 Ross, No Respect 49.
323 Ross, No Respect 53.
However, while this left culturalist tradition is an important one its influence on the development of contemporary cultural studies in the US, and in particular on disciplinary formations like American studies, should not be overrated. Thus, for example, while Denning has argued that the recent shift within American studies towards cultural studies indicates that “American studies has once again become a space of ‘radical critique’,” a brief examination of this culturalist turn suggests that Denning’s summation of the state of play of contemporary American studies is overly simplistic. In contrast to Denning, I would argue that the shift from American studies to American cultural studies does not represent a resurgence of radicalism within American studies but rather that the discourse of cultural studies has, for the most part, been appropriated by liberal American studies scholars with little interest in cultural studies’ radical political roots.

A case in point is Jay Mechling’s essay “Some [New] Elementary Axioms for an American Cultur[al] Studies.” In this essay, Mechling, who clearly defines himself and his reader as “the liberal, pluralist teacher,” attempts to rethink in a reflexive manner the basic premises of American studies, taking into account the critical challenge posed by “her interdisciplinary sister field, Cultural Studies.” While initially offering a critique of the theoretical gaps in cultural studies, Mechling goes on to meditate on the ways in which American studies might fruitfully “move in the direction of an American Cultural Studies.” Questioning the relevance of European theory to American cultural issues, he then offers the reader a series of axioms which might prove useful to an American cultural studies, axioms that draw upon a wide range of American theoretical sources from anthropology to symbolic interactionism.

Mechling’s focus on the need for knowledge to be local and contextual and his emphasis on cultural pluralism suggests a number of links with the radical project of British cultural studies in terms of its critique of dominant forms of knowledge. Indeed, Mechling’s scholarship, with its focus on the body, experience and the contingency of knowledge, adopts a rhetoric that is at times indistinguishable from that of a more radical cultural politics. However, Mechling acknowledges that his own theoretical debt is to pragmatism while his political concerns are liberal rather than radical. In particular, he positions himself

326 Mechling 25.
327 Mechling 10.
politically, after Richard Rorty, as a “liberal ironist.” Mechling’s scholarship, while culturalist in focus, is underpinned by a politics that is far from radical, thereby undermining Watt’s monolithic portrayal of an American studies in the grip of a “cultural left.”

Indeed, as an essay by Philip Fisher—another liberal-leaning American studies scholar who uses the terms American studies, American literary studies and cultural studies interchangeably—confirms, the shift away from a myth-based model of culture towards a rhetoric of cultural pluralism has been accompanied by a tendency within the pragmatist strand of American studies scholarship to reduce political issues to questions of community and conversation rather than discussing social structures and power. In his discussion of some of the central works and movements that have influenced American studies, Fisher argues that, alongside the rise of identity politics in the seventies and eighties, we have witnessed “the major recuperation of American philosophical pragmatism” naming Richard Rorty as one of the figures in whose work “the philosophical and literary tradition of American pragmatism has been returned to central interest in our cultural life.”

While pragmatism seems to offer a challenge to the status quo at the level of rhetoric and representation, its focus on the liberating possibilities of conversation rather than confrontation and its refusal to deal with the interrelations between knowledge and power, tend to leave traditional political structures intact. As Rorty himself admits, pragmatism represents “a philosophy tailored to the needs of political liberalism” rather than radicalism. Rorty views the democratic capitalist society as the most likely political environment to encourage cultural pluralism and diversity. Thus, while Fisher’s account of pragmatism’s utility to American (cultural) studies shares the concerns of left culturalist thinkers with the power of representation and rhetoric, politically it is nevertheless far removed from the radicalism associated with the feminist, African-Americanist and postcolonial strains of thought within American studies.

328 Mechling 14.
329 Mechling 26.
331 Fisher 240.
Denning has persuasively argued that the recent “revival” of American studies has involved a broad based resurgence of interest within academic circles in the leftist cultural criticism that emerged out of the radical cultural politics of the thirties. However, while some of these concerns have found themselves rearticulated to radical contemporary intellectual formations, the liberal pragmatist orientation of American studies scholars like Mechling and Fisher indicates that the legacy of the cultural front is more complex than Denning’s account might suggest and that aspects of this legacy have been just as readily appropriated to a politics of liberal pluralism. What this process emphasises, then, is that, like the diverse ways in which the politics of the cultural front have been revived and revisited, the development of American cultural studies in the United States has been impacted upon by equally diverse and divergent sets of political, theoretical and disciplinary agendas.

In this next section, I want to discuss a field of knowledge that, like American studies, possesses a complex (and at times shared) political and intellectual ancestry, and whose contribution to the development of American cultural studies has also largely gone unrecognised, namely the field of communications studies. Again I want to frame my account of this field via a discussion of a contemporary cultural studies figure, in this case Lawrence Grossberg. What follows, then, is a discussion of the role played by Grossberg in both importing British cultural studies to the US in the eighties and in re-articulating the cultural studies project to a set of distinctly American intellectual traditions and concerns. What I am particularly interested in is the way in which Grossberg’s attempts to forge a distinctly American brand of cultural studies have been influenced by his disciplinary location in communications and more specifically by the work of the prominent communications scholar James W. Carey, a central figure in the initial development of cultural theory within communications in the US.

iii. “Bringing it all Back Home:” Lawrence Grossberg, British Cultural Studies and Communications

While Lawrence Grossberg has played a pivotal role in the formation of a distinctly American approach to cultural studies, he is perhaps best known for being one of the first American academics to champion the cause of British cultural studies, having both studied at

333 This phrase is taken from the title of Grossberg’s 1997 book Bringing It All Back Home.
Birmingham and played a major role in “importing” some of British cultural studies’ best work and theorists to the US in the eighties.\footnote{Indeed Andrew Ross describes Grossberg as a figure providing one of the major links with “the British cultural studies diaspora.” Ross. Telephone interview.} However, while Grossberg’s own work is certainly indebted to British cultural studies, particularly the work of Stuart Hall and Raymond Williams, it would be far too reductive to view Grossberg as an academic practising an essentially Birmingham-style of cultural studies within a US setting. Rather, Grossberg draws on a much more diverse set of influences than his Birmingham School associations suggest.

In the introduction to We Gotta Get Out of This Place,\footnote{Grossberg, “Introduction: Theory, Politics and Passion,” 1-33.} for example, Grossberg’s discussion of the hijacking of American national-popular culture by the right parallels Stuart Hall’s work on the cultural hegemony of Thatcherism in Britain in the eighties. In particular, Grossberg outlines the way in which rock music (until recently the primary popular formation foregrounded in Grossberg’s writings) is a useful site from which to analyse the complex relations of culture and power in the context of this “new conservatism.” However, the similarities between Grossberg’s work and the CCCS’s Gramscian focus on the hegemonic processes within popular culture end here. As Grossberg’s discussion continues it becomes apparent that he is less concerned with reading ideological questions off the textual body of rock music (as per a Hall-style analysis) than he is with immersing his analysis in the anti-ideological terrain of affect and everyday experience, analytic categories and modes that Grossberg borrows from theorists such as Deleuze and Guattari (via Meaghan Morris) and Henri Lefebvre.

The kind of theoretical eclecticism suggested by this analytic framework provides an insight into the varied influences on Grossberg’s cultural studies practice. However, here I do want to confine my focus primarily to an analysis of Grossberg’s relation to British cultural studies and to communications, the field in which he has primarily worked as an academic. More specifically, I want to suggest that Grossberg’s partial but critical usage of Hall marks both his debt to, and at the same time his ambivalence towards, the analytic categories of British cultural studies while his anti-ideological analysis of rock has also emerged out of a long and critical dialogue with the dominant models of culture and communication within the field of communications studies. In this sense, Grossberg provides a particularly useful model for
thinking about the way in which American cultural studies has drawn upon an American culturalist legacy at the same time as it has critically engaged with the British tradition of cultural studies. Before I go on to discuss Grossberg’s relationship to the cultural studies stream within American communications, then, I want to examine in more detail his link with British cultural studies and to think about the ways in which Grossberg’s critical engagement with communications studies has framed his encounter with the Birmingham School.

iv. From Birmingham to Illinois

Grossberg’s close relations with British cultural studies are due, in part, to the fact that Grossberg actually spent some time at Birmingham as a graduate student taking seminars with both Hoggart and Hall, as well as participating in one of the Centre’s collective work projects.336 Grossberg, who had completed an undergraduate degree in philosophy at Rochester University in 1968 (in a department that was primarily oriented towards analytic philosophy), was, at that time, interested in theorising popular music but lacked the theoretical tools with which to do so.337 However, some of the contacts that Grossberg had made during his time at Rochester were sympathetic to his scholarly concerns, in particular various figures in the history department, including Hayden White, and they suggested that he study at the then relatively new CCCS at Birmingham University. While Grossberg was based at Birmingham for only a relatively short period of time (from 1968 to 1969), during which he worked on an MA thesis on rock music, he was exposed to a variety of theoretical approaches which had yet to find their way to the American academy. Studying at the Centre at a time when its cultural studies project was still in an embryonic stage of development, Grossberg experienced first hand the “grab bag” approach to theorising that characterised the Centre’s early attempts at mapping out the relations between culture and society. As he recently observed “we read everything, whatever was available, from sociology, anthropology, phenomenology, Sartre...to Levi Strauss, symbolic interactionism, Durkheim, Weber, Kenneth Burke, Merleau Ponty.”338

336 Note that other important US cultural studies scholars, including Hazel Carby and Michael Denning, have also studied at Birmingham. Ohmann 11.
338 Grossberg. Personal Interview.
While Grossberg left the CCCS before completing his dissertation, his early experiences at the centre had a powerful influence on his subsequent academic career and marked the beginning of an ongoing dialogue with British cultural studies, a dialogue which subsequently saw Grossberg play an influential role in importing British cultural studies to the American academy. As an article by Grossberg published in the *Journal of Communicative Inquiry* in 1986 suggests, it took a considerable amount of time before US academics became aware of the mounting corpus of work associated with British cultural studies.\(^{339}\) In this article, Grossberg documents some of the reasons why cultural studies was not taken up by the American academy sooner, citing, in particular, the dispersed nature of the field and the shifting character of its theoretical approaches as barriers to its institutionalisation into the disciplinised structure of the US academy. Speculating, then, about the reasons for the sudden interest in cultural studies, Grossberg argues that a growing dissatisfaction with current theoretical approaches, along with the increasing politicisation of the academy, and the slow infiltration of continental philosophies into the graduate curriculum, had all recently contributed to create the conditions for its acceptance.

Grossberg also observes, however, that “perhaps most powerfully, the recent visibility of Stuart Hall in the United States”\(^ {340}\) is what “sold” cultural studies in the United States. Hall’s writings were becoming increasingly available in the United States in the eighties, providing what was from an American perspective the relatively amorphous field of British cultural studies with a coherent identity and a charismatic intellectual voice. While Grossberg played an important role in translating British cultural studies concerns (and particularly Hall’s work) into an American context through his own writing and teaching, his impact was, to a certain degree, limited to the field of communications (and to the inter-disciplinary network of contacts that Grossberg had forged through the Unit for Criticism and Interpretive Theory at the University of Illinois). In 1982, however, that influence increased when Grossberg played a pivotal role in organising two major conferences that marked a turning point in the legitimisation and dispersal of cultural studies throughout the American academy, and it was the first of those conferences, “Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture” held in 1982, that saw Stuart Hall gain a degree of prominence within the US academy.

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Grossberg, along with other figures involved in the University of Illinois’ Unit for Criticism and Interpretive Theory including Cary Nelson, decided to organise a six week summer school on Marxism, inviting scholars like Gayatri Spivak, Fredric Jameson, Perry Anderson and of course Hall. For Grossberg, the summer school was, in part, an attempt to forge some links with Birmingham even though the event was not explicitly marked out as cultural studies. While Hall had given a few lectures in the United States prior to the “Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture” conference, his charismatic performance at the conference meant that Hall rapidly became a celebrity figure, a process that helped to place British cultural studies on the American intellectual agenda. Thus, while the first major cultural studies conference to be held in the United States, (the “Cultural Studies Now and in the Future” conference organised again through the Unit for Criticism and Interpretive Theory, this time by Grossberg, Nelson and Treichler) has been seen by many as putting cultural studies on the US and arguably the global intellectual map, Grossberg himself contends that it was really the Marxism and Interpretation conference, and in particular the starring role played by Stuart Hall, that triggered the emergence of cultural studies in the United States.

While Grossberg played a pivotal role in importing British cultural studies to the United States, he has, nevertheless, been highly critical of certain aspects of the Birmingham School approach. As Grossberg confesses “[m]y identification with British cultural studies has always been both intentional and awkward, since I have never quite understood how one could do “British” cultural studies in America.” While he observes that he is often described as practicing a variant of British cultural studies in America, “I prefer to think of myself as someone partly trained in British cultural studies, attempting to develop a cultural studies appropriate to fin de siècle America.” Thus while acknowledging his debt to British cultural studies, Grossberg recognises the impossibility of applying cultural theories and methodologies articulated to specifically British concerns directly to an American cultural context. Rather than being tied to an originary cultural studies project, for Grossberg, the boundaries of cultural studies have to constantly be redefined “in response to

341 Grossberg. Personal interview. Ohmann also documents two other early cultural studies meetings. The “Sociological Approaches to Literature” division of the MLA held a forum on “What should Cultural Studies Be?” in 1988 while a major conference held at the University of Oklahoma in 1990 was subtitled “Cultural Studies in the 1990s.” Ohmann 6.
342 Grossberg, We Gotta Get Out of This Place 16.
343 Grossberg, Bringing it all Back Home 246.
changing geographical and historical, political, institutional, and intellectual conditions." Grossberg’s attempts to develop a cultural studies able to deal with and respond to the specificities of American cultural experience have thus involved a necessary critical reformulation of the models utilised by British cultural studies theorists, a reformulation that has been powerfully shaped by Grossberg’s relationship with the field of communications.

Aside from his own role in translating British cultural studies for a United States audience, Grossberg argues that Richard Johnson’s article “What is Cultural Studies Anyway” which was published in *Social Text* in 1987, has had an important impact on the kind of cultural studies that has found its way into the American academy. Grossberg’s critique of Johnson’s article provides a self-reflexive commentary on some of the problems associated with importing theory while, at the same time, generating an insight into his own concerns about the limitations of some of the models of culture privileged within British cultural studies, limitations which overlap with some of Grossberg’s anxieties regarding the culturalist approaches utilised within the field of communications. In particular, he argues that Johnson’s article, which for many American academics represented their first introduction to British cultural studies, tends to privilege one approach to culture, namely a communications model, a model which was readily adapted into the pre-existing theoretical models of English and literary studies departments. In the article, Johnson, who was the director of the CCCS at the time of publication, a fact that no doubt contributed to the article’s semi-canonical status within the American academy, attempts to present an overview of British cultural studies. However, belying Grossberg’s argument that Johnson’s article offers a reductive version of British cultural studies, the introductory section of the article outlines very clearly Johnson’s own misgivings about putting definitional boundaries around a project that is rooted in an anti-definitional ethos. Arguing that British cultural studies developed around a culture of critique—that is, through its critical encounters with disciplines such as English and history, and with social movements like feminism and the anti-racist movement—Johnson suggests that cultural studies is as an intrinsically open field. Thus, one of the primary concerns he outlines from the outset, a concern which is obviously

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344 Grossberg, *Bringing it all Back Home* 246.
346 Grossberg, *Bringing it all Back Home* 286.
directed to a United States audience in particular, is that the increasing institutionalisation of
cultural studies within universities might lead to its being reduced to an “orthodoxy.”

Despite these qualifications, when Johnson does attempt to define the methodological
concerns of cultural studies he tends to fall into the reductive trap outlined by Grossberg by
assuming that all cultural formations are essentially texts which communicate meaning.
While Johnson runs through an analysis of various cultural studies approaches, from those
that privilege analyses of cultural production through text based notions of culture to more
ethnographically inclined studies of lived culture, he argues that these seemingly diverse
approaches are all intertwined, pulling them together under the rubric of what is an
essentially communicational model of culture. In particular, Johnson’s article privileges an
encoding/decoding model of the workings of culture, albeit in a more complex form than
Hall’s early model. Thus, he metaphorises the cultural production as a “circuit...[of]
production, circulation and consumption.”

In rethinking British cultural studies for an American context, Grossberg has been
particularly critical of the way in which this communicational model of culture has tended to
dominate British cultural analysis and has subsequently been imported to a complex
American cultural context where he argues it has especially limited utility. In his 1988 essay
“It’s a Sin: Politics, Postmodernity and the Popular,” Grossberg argues that critical overviews
of British cultural studies (such as Johnson’s) often erase the specific historical and cultural
contexts out of which its theories and methodologies have emerged. As a consequence, there
is a tendency to privilege certain theories and concerns as defining the cultural studies project
without recognising the necessarily conjunctural and therefore limited nature of any one
cultural studies paradigm. Furthermore, Grossberg argues that because of the specific
historical conjuncture out of which cultural studies emerged in Britain, certain approaches to
popular culture became naturalised while other theoretical models available at the time were
marginalised or erased. More specifically, Grossberg contends that cultural studies tended to
base its understanding of popular culture on E. P. Thomson’s identification of culture with
political struggle while paying less attention to Raymond William’s more holistic argument
that culture can only be understood “as the relations among all the elements in a whole way

347 Johnson 40.
348 Johnson 46.
of life.”

Early on in the development of British cultural studies, then, a set of assumptions emerged in which popular culture was depicted as the “other” of dominant culture, an oppositional formulation that excluded mainstream commercial culture from the realm of the popular. In conjunction with this dichotomous representation of popular versus official culture, a set of correspondences were constructed between social location and political position whereby social marginality was equated with political resistance.

It is this early understanding of culture in the either/or terms of dominance or resistance, along with the equation made between identity and ideology, that paved the way for the hegemony of a communications-based model of culture within British cultural studies. According to this model, culture is the mediating space between popular forms or “texts” and the social subject; that is, “culture is bifurcated into the relationship between texts and lived reality; lived reality is reduced to the social determination of experience.”

Such a conception of culture, then, has lead to the kind of research that, for example, attempts to read the “reality” of social experience directly off cultural texts. Furthermore, Grossberg argues that British cultural studies tends to be preoccupied with viewing culture in ideological terms, where ideology is seen as being “located in the relationship between social position, meaning and experience.”

While the communicational model, with its reliance on clear distinctions between texts and audiences, cultural forms and social identities, and its emphasis on meaning and representation, may have proved useful in the early days of cultural studies, Grossberg argues that in a contemporary landscape of shifting cultural practices, identities and group alliances, cultural studies can no longer rely on the kinds of stable notions of identity and community upon which communications models are based. Thus, strongly influenced by Hall’s work in the eighties, Grossberg has played a pivotal role in attempting to push cultural studies away from a continued reliance on encoding and decoding models and its tendency to reduce cultural issues to questions of ideology. In particular, the impact of Hall’s analysis of Thatcherism in *The Hard Road to Renewal* is apparent in much of Grossberg’s work on the American national-popular. Hall’s argument that the success of the New Right was won in

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350 Grossberg, “It’s a Sin,” 17.
part through its ability to successfully interpellate segments of the working class into the
discourse of what Hall termed “popular authoritarianism” signals for Grossberg a shift away
from fixed notions of social identity and political affiliation within the popular; in other
words, he posits a move from identity based notions of communication and representation to
conceptualising culture in terms of the potentiality of articulation.

However, Grossberg argues that Hall’s model of articulation does not go far enough in terms
of breaking with the Birmingham School’s previous understanding of the relations between
culture and society. Firstly, he argues that Hall’s usage of articulation is still tied to a
representational model of culture and that therefore cultural formations in Hall’s account are
still seen as communicating meaning. Secondly, Grossberg argues that while his
interpretation of articulation takes him some way towards breaking with the faith in a priori
social determination upon which the CCCS’s class and ideology-based analyses were
premised, in the final analysis Hall cannot accept the Foucauldian notion that social relations
have no pre-given logic but rather represent “a relation of non-relations.”

Grossberg’s specific usage of the notion of articulation gives an insight into the way in which
his work both draws upon and radically departs from the basic tenets of British cultural
studies. Given Grossberg’s philosophical background, it is perhaps not surprising that one of
Grossberg’s primary critiques of the work of the CCCS is that it is founded upon the Kantian
tradition. The focus within much of British cultural studies on culture as a field of mediation
is drawn, Grossberg argues, from Kant’s notion “that human beings are condemned to always
confront, not a real world, but the phenomenal world of their own creation,” a phenomenal
world that is seen by cultural studies as being structured by “maps of meaning” and
therefore underpinned by a communicational model of culture.

In attempting to rethink cultural studies in the light of a set of specifically American
concerns Grossberg has thereby set out to create a new vocabulary that draws upon some of
the insights of British cultural studies but that also attempts to name those cultural effects and
formations that are left out of the Kantian-based cultural studies equation. Thus, while
Grossberg draws upon Hall’s (and Gramsci’s) model of articulation and hegemony, he has

351 Grossberg, “It’s a Sin,” 17.
352 Grossberg. Personal interview.
353 Grossberg, We Gotta Get Out of This Place 43.
attempted to further radicalise this model through merging it with the anti-Kantian conceptions of “effectivity, spatiality, and ‘machinics’” that circulate in the work of Foucault as well as that of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari.

In brief, Grossberg attempts to take the useful elements of articulation theory (its radical contextuality, its focus on the micropolitics of power) and the critical conceptions of these anti-Kantian thinkers (the shift away from texts to effects, the move from a politics of interpretation to a politics of the “real”) and develop what he terms a “spatial materialism.” As Grossberg points out, his experiences attempting to theorise and teach popular culture demonstrated the limitations of transcendent approaches to culture. In particular, he notes that when he first started teaching rock and roll to undergraduates he rapidly became aware of the fact that his attempts to fit rock and roll into a framework of signification did not match with the potent and often diverse experiences of his students. Grossberg thus attempted to move towards an understanding of the popular that could accept a diversity of individual responses and that could also accommodate the fact that those responses often occurred at an affective rather than a symbolic level. His notion of spatial materialism signals a recognition of the popular as a space of structured and structuring effects and as a realm in which desire and pleasure are (like Foucault’s notion of power) marked by positivity and productivity rather than lack. Furthermore, in contrast to the rigidity of the a priori frameworks of signification that underpin many cultural studies analyses, Grossberg’s notion of spatial materialism goes some way to providing cultural studies with a critical approach capable of reconstructing itself as it articulates with the contingencies of everyday cultural practices.

Grossberg’s notion of spatial materialism obviously owes a lot to British cultural studies in the sense that it emerges both as a reaction to the Kantian premises underpinning the legacy of Hall’s encoding-decoding model and as an attempt to move towards a more holistic, Williams-inflected conception of culture and experience. However, Grossberg’s reading of British cultural studies, I would argue, must also be understood in relation to his location within the discipline of American communications given that the peculiar brand of American cultural studies Grossberg has forged has emerged primarily out of an encounter between

355 Grossberg, *Dancing in Spite of Myself* 29.
356 Grossberg, *We Gotta Get Out of This Place* 50.
British cultural studies and the “interpretive” stream within communications. In my next section, then, I focus directly on Grossberg’s relationship with the discipline of communications.

v. Grossberg and the Culturalist Legacy of Communications

When the history of cultural studies in the United States is written, I hope the authors will acknowledge the importance of the discipline of communication. As much as (the project if not the reality of) American studies, communication studies has provided key resources for the construction of an American cultural studies.357

Despite Grossberg’s connections with British cultural studies and the major role he has played in helping increase the visibility of cultural studies within the US academy, his own intellectual work is not as visible as might be expected. As Andrew Ross has pointed out, while Grossberg has played a crucial role in the development of US cultural studies, his contribution has often gone unrecognised by the American humanities.358 Paradoxically, however, Grossberg is a well known figure in the international cultural studies community (and in certain, mostly non-literary, circles in American cultural studies). For instance, while Gil Rodman has recently suggested that Grossberg (along with Hall and Morris) is one of the “more prominent international figures in cultural studies,”359 for the most part within the American academy and its connected media spheres, cultural studies is arguably more likely to be associated with figures like Donna Haraway, Gayatri Spivak, Cornel West, Judith Butler, Henry A. Giroux, and Andrew Ross.

One of the main reasons for Grossberg’s relatively marginal status, compared with figures like Haraway, is his location within the discipline of communications, a field that, as Ross points out, is more often than not based in state colleges rather than Ivy League universities and that has a fairly lowly professional status in the American academy compared with high prestige disciplines like English and literary studies.360 Grossberg’s relative invisibility within the more publicly recognised circles in US cultural studies, then, is a marker of the

358 Ross. Telephone interview.
powerful role played by English departments and the MLA in packaging and marketing cultural studies for a US academic audience. It also, to a lesser degree, points to the influence of geographic location on intellectual celebrity in the US. As Grossberg has himself noted, his disciplinary marginality is consolidated by the fact that the communications departments with which he has been associated (at the University of Illinois and the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill) are far from those centres of intellectual and media culture—such as New York (where Ross is based), Boston and Chicago, that tend to stand in for American intellectual and academic culture as a whole.³⁶¹

Despite the marginalising effects of being located within the field of communications, overall Grossberg’s relationship with the discipline has been a highly productive one. While Grossberg has had a somewhat combative relationship with mainstream communications studies, his membership in this broad-based field of knowledge has provided him with the institutional base from which to explore cultural issues. In particular, the “culturalist” tradition within communications associated with the prominent communications scholar James Carey provided Grossberg with a niche for his own cultural studies work. After Grossberg returned from Birmingham, he completed his graduate studies at the University of Illinois in the Institute of Communications Research under the supervision of Carey (who was recommended by Hall). He subsequently returned to Illinois to teach in the Department of Speech Communication and remained there until 1994 when he moved to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill to take up the position of Morris Davis Professor of Communications Studies. Grossberg thus has strong links with Illinois and with the “Illinois School” of cultural studies associated with Carey (which I discuss in the next section). While his approach to cultural studies has taken a very different path from that of Carey’s, as Grossberg has himself noted, Illinois’ prestigious status within communications circles provided his work with an authoritative edge that presumably allowed him a degree of intellectual freedom, while Carey (and other supportive figures within communications) also played an important mentoring role for Grossberg.³⁶²

Despite this institutional support, Grossberg’s early work was constrained to a certain degree by the disciplinary concerns of communications and it is these constraints that have in part

³⁶⁰ Ross. Telephone interview.
³⁶¹ Grossberg. Personal interview.
³⁶² Grossberg. Personal interview.
shaped the radical cultural studies path Grossberg has taken. Early on in his academic career in communications, Grossberg defined his work within the rubric of “philosophy of communications” rather than cultural studies. Despite this concession to the “parent” discipline, he and others in the field still had to fight hard to get recognition for their work. Grossberg faced substantial difficulties publishing his early attempts to introduce “theory” into communications, often being told his work was irrelevant to or too antagonistic towards the field. However, in a series of articles published in leading communication studies journals in the late seventies and early eighties, Grossberg provided a sustained critique of communications studies’ dominant methodologies. This critique had a significant influence on communications, opening up the field to critical theoretical concerns and, as Grossberg has commented, it enabled British cultural studies to be smuggled into a still largely conservative and instrumentalist tradition.363

Since then Grossberg has also attempted to place the critical work performed in communications on a broader cultural studies “map.” The “Cultural Studies Now and in the Future” conference at Illinois, for instance, included the cultural studies work of communications theorists like Rosalind Brunt, John Fiske, Paula Treichler, Laura Kipnis and Jody Berland. Grossberg has also emphasised the importance of recognising the early contribution to US cultural studies made by the “interpretive” tradition within communications and in a number of articles has compared and contrasted its Deweyan origins with that of early British cultural studies. For example, in an article first published in 1983 in *Communications in Transition*, Grossberg compared the work of American pragmatist John Dewey (who represented a major influence on both American studies and communications) and Raymond Williams arguing that, while at face value they seem temporally, geographically and philosophically far apart, their early theories of culture and communication were rather similar. In this commentary, then, we get a sense of the way in which Grossberg has acted as a kind of theoretical go-between for British and American versions of cultural studies. In particular, here, we see how Grossberg has played a critical role in the formation of US cultural studies by both defending a specifically American legacy of cultural studies while at the same time using his knowledge of British cultural studies to critique that legacy. Thus, comparing the early development of culturalist approaches to communication in British and America, Grossberg argues that like Williams, Dewey was

363 Grossberg. Personal interview.
concerned with thinking through the relations between modes of communication and forms of social life, seeing community and communication as being inextricably bound together. Furthermore, Dewey shared with figures like Hoggart and Williams a nostalgia for community in the face of the increasing massification of culture (Dewey had moved to Chicago from a small New England town while Hoggart and Williams both hailed from tight-knit working class communities).

While Dewey and Williams started off with similar concerns, however, their work subsequently moved off in different directions. Thus, Grossberg notes that within Britain cultural studies the focus moved towards an examination of the points of intersection between semiotics and theories of ideology. In contrast, he argues that the work on culture and communication that emerged out of the legacy of the Chicago school of social theory, a legacy I touch upon in my discussion of Carey and communications, found itself poorly equipped to account for the relations between communicational forms and social processes. Grossberg contends that while questions of power and social struggle were central to the British “culture and society” tradition, the American academy’s marginalisation of the “culturalist” position within social theory and communications, the increasing hegemony of the scientific effects tradition, and Dewey’s reliance on a naturalistic idealism, resulted in a naive and under-theorised model of culture and community. Grossberg concludes that the Deweyan legacy looked to the “great community” of the nation for a new common culture while presupposing that power was somehow external to the communicative processes that might bring such a community together.

Grossberg’s critical account of the “culturalist” stream within communications mirrors his own fraught relationship with communications studies. While, on the one hand, communications has provided him with a culturalist legacy which he has attempted to bring into a critical dialogue with other theoretical traditions such as British cultural studies (as well as French and Australian theoretical concerns), on the other hand, in opening up communications to critical scrutiny he has revealed its weaknesses, in particular, its relative anti-theoreticism compared with other cultural studies models and its poor grasp of questions of power and ideology. Despite these weaknesses, however, Grossberg has attempted to

364 Subsequently published as “Cultural Studies Revisited and Revised,” Bringing it all Back Home 141-73.
365 Grossberg, Bringing it all Back Home 144.
366 Grossberg, Bringing it all Back Home 248.
367 Grossberg, Bringing it all Back Home 248.
build on, rather than reject, communications’ culturalist legacy and in this next section I want to discuss one of the major contributors to that legacy, James Carey.

vi. Carey and the “Illinois School” of Cultural Studies

As I have noted, communications studies’ relatively marginal disciplinary status compared with more prestigious areas such as literary studies has meant that its contribution to American cultural studies has often been overlooked; however, more recently cultural studies theorists have acknowledged the role that communications departments and programmes have played in fostering a uniquely American style of cultural studies. Thus, in their introduction to *Australian Cultural Studies*, John Frow and Meaghan Morris question the reification of cultural studies’ British origins suggesting an alternative intellectual genealogy might be found, for example, in the work of North American communications theorists such as Harold Innis and James W. Carey. Similarly, Alan O’Connor argues that while cultural studies has only recently attained widespread institutional recognition as a “new” field of knowledge in the United States, it has existed for some time as a “minority tradition” within communications.

It seems that, like American studies, communications has constituted an important site where issues and theories of culture have been debated in the US academy. As Grossberg has pointed out, like the work of early British cultural studies theorists like Williams, the field of communications emerged out of a concern with the problems and possibilities that the new forms of mass communication offered community life. However, as Jensen and Pauly have argued, for the most part the American perspective on culture differed considerably from the concerns of British cultural studies. Drawing upon an intellectual and political legacy which foregrounded “the problems and prospects of participatory democracy,” American cultural debates were traditionally been centred around thinking through which types of culture might be most conducive to producing a “diverse, experimental and modernizing nation.”

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It is out of this distinctly American set of concerns with the relations between democracy and communication, citizenship and community (as opposed to the British focus on power and ideology) that what Jensen and Pauly have termed the “Illinois style of cultural studies” emerged within the field of communications. They argue that, at the same time as French structuralist theories of culture began to emerge in the period post-68, “James Carey and his students at the University of Illinois (and for a time at the University of Iowa) were fashioning an American version of cultural studies.” While it acknowledged the early British cultural studies work of theorists like Williams, Hoggart, Hall and Whannel, what was unique about the “Illinois School” was that it drew primarily on the writings of American theorists like Clifford Geertz and C. Wright Mills, American studies scholars such as Henry Nash Smith and Alan Trachtenberg, and a number of figures associated with the Chicago School of Sociology, including John Dewey and the work of Canadian economist and historian of technology, Harold Adams Innis (who taught Carey).

Carey, who has recently attempted to narrativise his involvement in developing an early (communications-oriented) form of American cultural studies, has emphasised the fact that, while he was aware at the time of British cultural studies and of European cultural and social theory, the “Illinois School” formed as a reaction against hegemonic political and intellectual processes specific to the American situation, and subsequently looked to a distinctly American legacy of (liberal) progressive social democratic thought for solutions. Thus, in his recent essay, “Reflections on the Project of (American) Cultural Studies,” Carey retrospectively characterises his attempt to develop an alternative intellectual project within the field of communications as marking a response to the dominance of the “effects tradition” within communications in the fifties. That attempt at finding a progressive alternative to scientific positivism, however, also marked what was for Carey a broader reaction against a political and intellectual climate which was becoming increasingly anti-democratic. Reflecting back on that period, Carey describes a conservative cultural and intellectual milieu in which “political economy, historical studies, work that flowed out of pragmatism and the Chicago School, such as symbolic interactionism, were being rapidly eroded, displaced and

372 Jensen and Pauly 162.
373 Jensen and Pauly 162. Here it must be noted that Grossberg, who played an important role in the development of cultural studies at Illinois, has pointed out that what Jensen and Pauly have called the “Illinois
marginalized in the American academy by the power of the formal and behavioural sciences which were colonizing intellectual life.”

He recalls that in 1963, in response to this increasingly narrow intellectual focus, “I suggested that it made sense to group together as an intellectual and political position a wide variety of work under the label ‘cultural studies’.”

At the time, positivism had not only infiltrated the academy but had also emerged as an increasingly dominant discourse within American culture. This process, Carey notes, “had more than academic consequences in the United States for it created a considerable coalition, implicitly uniting commerce, the state and the academy in a project of social reconstruction. The task of cultural studies was, then, simultaneously intellectual and political: to contest the body of theoretical and empirical work carried forward in the name of positive science and to contest the project of social reconstruction carried forward, implicitly or otherwise, in the name of positive knowledge.”

For Carey, the cultural studies project at Illinois was centrally concerned with the formation of a space within the academy where disciplines could come together across the humanities/social science divide to encourage scholarship that was “historical, critical, interpretive and empirical”—that is, the kind of scholarship increasingly marginalised within a climate of academic instrumentalism. The term “cultural studies” was not in widespread use at the time and while Carey was aware of the Birmingham School (he had read Raymond Williams and E. P. Thompson’s work and had corresponded with Richard Hoggart), he claims that he developed the phrase from Weber’s notion of “cultural science.”

Thus, although British and American cultural studies shared some broad similarities in the sense that they both emerged out of the mass culture debates of the fifties, Carey’s account suggests that in the United States, cultural studies was framed by a rather different set of intellectual debates. For instance, while he argues that the origins of British cultural studies lie in literary studies, by contrast, American cultural studies emerged in a context dominated

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378 Grossberg, Letter to the Author. 16 May 1999. School” was never a “homogenous group” but rather generated multiple versions of cultural studies.
by behavioural science. Furthermore, Carey contends that while British cultural theorists showed some interest in the culturalist framework provided by symbolic interactionism and were influenced by Weber, they “were relatively untouched by the Frankfurt School which dominated the largely non-academic speculation on mass culture in America.”

What also marked the Illinois approach to cultural studies out as different from its British counterpart was the uniquely American intellectual and political legacy, with its debt to John Dewey and American pragmatism, upon which Carey drew.

While there were some similarities between the British “culture and society” tradition and the concerns of American scholars like John Dewey and architect and Progressivist Lewis Mumford (in the early part of this century Mumford and other Progressivist intellectuals forged what Andrew Ross has described as a “brand of cultural criticism...based upon an organic, preindustrial ethic”), Carey argues that the tradition of philosophical pragmatism inaugurated by Dewey and William James was largely unknown in Britain. Furthermore, British cultural studies increasingly sought to theorise the workings of power and ideology through structuralist models and thus had relatively little interest in the culturalist framework of symbolic interactionism, an approach that emerged out of the work of the Chicago School of social theory and that had a major influence on progressive thinkers in both American studies and communications. In contrast, American cultural studies, due to its scepticism towards the mainstream social sciences, was wary according to Carey of the functionalist and determinist aspects of structuralism and leaned more towards interpretive, symbolic models of culture and community. Thus, in Britain, symbolic interactionism tended to be limited to the analysis of subcultures and the study of deviancy whereas, as Carey points out, “it has provided a much more generalized model of social action in the American case.”

Indeed, Carey makes the claim that “[c]ultural studies, on an American terrain, has been given its most powerful expression by John Dewey and in the tradition of symbolic interactionism, which developed out of American pragmatism generally.”

380 Ross, No Respect 217.
381 Although, as Elizabeth Long notes some of the early work at Birmingham, such as the discussions of deviancy found in Resistance Through Rituals (1976), drew directly upon symbolic interactionism. See Long, “Introduction: Engaging Sociology and Cultural Studies,” From Sociology to Cultural Studies 5.
The intellectual roll-call cited by Carey in his account of the development of American cultural studies thus recalls that of the early Progressivist and pragmatist traditions drawn upon by American studies scholars and Popular Front intellectuals. Furthermore, it also draws on a broad tradition of American social theory, in particular, that of the Chicago School, a field which, as Elizabeth Long points out in her book on sociology and cultural studies in the US, was one of the pivotal early American intellectual movements concerned with mapping the social and cultural changes which accompanied the shift to modernity, and which, from the outset, produced social theory with “a profoundly cultural bent.”

In particular, the early and groundbreaking work of urban sociologists like Robert Park and George Herbert Mead paved the way for the emergence of “symbolic interactionism.”

Thus, Carey’s culturalist legacy draws upon a number of broad-based and intersecting intellectual and political movements occurring in the US from the late nineteenth century to the 1920s. Accordingly, while the American pragmatists provided Carey with a means of dealing with the reflexive nature of the relationship between scholarship and society, his theories of culture also drew upon the writings of Robert Park and the other members of the Chicago school who translated Weber to an American setting via a pragmatist framework. The broadly “progressive” and critical concerns of the pragmatists and the Chicago School then re-emerged in the forties and fifties in the work of figures like David Riesman, C. Wright Mills, Harold Innis and Kenneth Burke, figures whose influential legacy Carey also cites.

As I’ve noted, however, Carey’s specific brand of cultural theory has been marginalised within accounts of American cultural studies with most narratives portraying cultural studies as a new field largely imported from Britain in the eighties. From Carey’s perspective, however, the specific strain of cultural studies which emerged in the eighties is a textualist or discursive version of British cultural studies, and as such is quite removed from the Illinois style of cultural studies with its focus (after symbolic interactionism and the “frame analysis” of Erving Goffman) on everyday social relations and rituals “rather than the messages transacted within those forms.”

Indeed, Carey’s observations regarding the path taken by

386 Carey, “Overcoming Resistance to Cultural Studies,” 64.
much of contemporary cultural studies reveal a deep antipathy to the theoretical formalism that he sees as informing the latest developments in cultural studies. Arguing that “the encounter between British cultural studies and French structuralism and poststructuralism [was a] deeply deforming episode,” he sees contemporary British cultural studies as having largely moved away from the progressive legacy of Williams and Hoggart. 388 Furthermore, he argues that when British cultural studies crossed the Atlantic via France “it acquired a number of characteristics, including a certain philosophical tone and obsession, that led to its absorption into literature departments and transformed its study in communications into an analogue of literary study.” 389

For Carey, one of the main problems produced by cultural studies’ detour via France, was the fact that French philosophy, due to its relatively privileged position over the positive sciences within French intellectual culture, has for the most part been uninterested in providing a critique of positivism. Accordingly, the (post)structuralist-inflected style of cultural studies that emerged in the eighties had little relevance within the context of an American intellectual culture that continued to be dominated by positivism. Thus, Carey argues, the “new” cultural studies was for the most part ignored by the social and natural sciences while its location largely within English departments meant that it lost any contact it might have once had with the social sciences. This lack of dialogue with other disciplines has, according to Carey, exacerbated contemporary cultural studies’ tendency “to reduce social phenomena to interactions with a text.” 390 Furthermore, he argues that cultural studies’ methodological and theoretical narrowness has extended to its objects of study with many cultural studies scholars tending to focus on the mass media and consumption practices while effectively marginalising other spheres of American political culture.

In contrast, then, Carey’s approach to cultural studies emerges out of a critical, anti-positivist tradition within communications research which calls for a direct engagement with the political economy of cultural production. 391 For Carey the solutions to social and political reform are to be found not so much in the Marxist-inflected scholarship of the Birmingham school or the American Marxism of the cultural front but rather in the liberalism of American

pragmatism. As in the writings of his intellectual predecessor John Dewey, for Carey social emancipation must be grounded in a politics of communication. In other words, Carey like his American studies counterparts holds an essentially liberal pragmatist belief in the emancipatory possibilities of open public debate, believing that democratic process must begin at the level of human conversation.

While in some ways it is not surprising that Carey’s work has been characterised “as the missing American link to the British tradition of cultural studies” given that his embrace of culturalist approaches to communications issues has always been framed by a concern with the broader political and social contexts in which interpretive and symbolic communities exist, nevertheless, Carey’s narrative regarding the development of the Illinois “school” of cultural studies suggests that this intellectual movement needs to be seen as quite distinct from the British tradition. In particular the kind of “left liberalism” associated with Carey’s culturalist approach is indicative of the very different kinds of political models that inform American progressive intellectual culture.

III. PRACTISING AMERICAN CULTURAL STUDIES: THE POLITICS OF ACADEMIA

As I’ve noted previously, accounts of the export of British cultural studies to the American academy have tended to be marked by a narrative of political decline. According to this narrative, cultural studies’ origins were located in grass roots social movements such as worker’s education and the labour movement, and, while its subsequent location at the CCCS represented some degree of institutionalisation and professionalisation, British cultural studies was seen to retain its extra-academic links while remaining relatively marginal to the credentialist and disciplinary demands of the university system. In its travels to the United States in the eighties, however, it seems that cultural studies became rapidly assimilated into the highly professionalised world of American academe. Taken up by powerful disciplines such as English and literary studies, cultural studies in the United States was perceived by many critics to have been transformed into a purely academic discourse divorced from its originary political and social concerns.

In this chapter I have highlighted some of the flaws in this narrative, pointing out the US traditions of cultural theory that preexisted or developed in tandem with those of British cultural studies as well as highlighting the complexity of the process whereby cultural studies became articulated to disciplinary structures (in particular English, American studies and communications) with varying degrees of institutional power. One particular point of emphasis has been the different and diverse political streams within American cultural studies. While accounts of British cultural studies tend to align it with a primarily Marxist politics, my discussion of cultural studies’ development in the US has variously linked it with Progressivism, American Marxism, and liberal pragmatism. Thus, rather than viewing US cultural studies as an apoliticised version of its British counterpart, I have attempted to suggest a different kind of genealogy for the unique forms of cultural studies practices and politics that have emerged in the American setting.

While continuing to recognise the diverse intellectual streams contributing to the development of American cultural studies, I want to turn now to a further discussion of some of the political consequences of its more recent academic legitimation under the banner of “American cultural studies.” In particular, I want to return to the concrete examples of Grossberg and Ross as a means of investigating the problematic of a professionalised, institutionally located cultural studies. One of the crucial questions I want to raise is whether the disciplinising processes of the academy are antithetical to a politicised cultural studies project. While it is certainly true that, on the whole, American universities are highly stratified and compartmentalised institutions in which the kinds of extra-institutional and anti-disciplinary practices that characterised the field of cultural studies at the CCCS would obviously be less readily accommodated, I want to suggest that this does not necessarily mean that the cultural studies intellectual must operate outside or on the margins of the academy in order to be radical or progressive.393

Both Grossberg’s and Ross’ approaches to cultural studies offer useful cases in point here. Grossberg is a successful academic at a wealthy, middle-rung university who has developed a

393 Here I am not suggesting, however, that the issue of location within the academic system is irrelevant to questions of intellectual politics. Obviously, different kinds of intellectual practices are made possible in say state versus private universities while, as I have suggested, the powerful disciplinary structures associated with fields like literary studies have a direct impact on the sorts of cultural studies knowledges produced within such structures. My point however is that institutionality and disciplinarity per se are not necessarily barriers to a radical cultural studies practice.
critical space within the predominantly positivist discipline of communications for the
generation and dissemination of a radical model of American cultural studies. What is
crucial I would argue about Grossberg’s contribution to the field of cultural studies is his
insistence on the possibility of a radical, academically-based set of practices and his emphasis
on the centrality of critical pedagogical and mentoring practices to the cultural studies
project. Ross is also an extremely successful professional academic with traditional
disciplinary credentials whose scholarship is at the same time openly interdisciplinary and
politicised. While Ross is university-based, however, his intellectual practices seem to have
more in common with the Birmingham School’s model of organicity than with Grossberg’s
strictly academicised set of practices. Thus, Ross’ intellectual labour is divided between
teaching (and, in particular, encouraging collectivist and activist approaches to academic
scholarship), writing for both academic and more “public” or journalist media, and forging
links between academia and various other political organisations and sites (Ross and his
NYU colleagues, for example, co-organised a conference on the fashion industry called “No
Sweat” with the garment workers’ union UNITE and The Nation). Despite the more “public”
nature of Ross’ political engagement, however, his cultural studies practices are legitimated
by his status as a professionalised intellectual located within a prestigious, highly visible
university rather than by a claim to institutional marginality. Accordingly, while Grossberg
and Ross adhere to rather different models of intellectualism, their approaches to cultural
studies both place into question the notion that the relationship between academic
professionalism and a radical cultural studies practice is necessarily oxymoronic.

In Secular Vocations (1993), Bruce Robbins’ account of professionalism and intellectual
culture in America, he points out that leftist intellectuals are—for the most part—
embarrassed by academic credentialism and its accompanying claims to expertise and
authority, often to the point of seeing “[p]rofessional status [as a form of] political self-
betrayal.” Thus, while many cultural studies practitioners recognise the need for
professional intellectuals to be working in areas such as cultural policy and the media, for
those based in universities there is still a sense that being a “tenured radical” somehow
equates to a situation of cooptation. Given that the American academy is seen as a highly
professionalised site, this explains to a certain degree the intense anxieties that have

394 Like Carey, Grossberg has been an important mentor for a generation of communications students who have,
for the most part, gone on to teach critical cultural studies within communications studies departments.
395 Robbins, Secular Vocations 3.
accompanied the rise of cultural studies in US universities. Furthermore, as Robbins argued in an earlier assessment of the plight of American intellectuals, part of the difficulty here also pertains to the fact that the cultural left in the states has had a certain degree of success in the university system. A central problem for progressive intellectuals (both in the US and Britain), then, is that while they are attempting to deal with the fact that they are no longer at the cultural or institutional margins, the vocabulary of intellectual practice still tends to be driven by the logic of alienated dissent that, as we have seen, underpins much cultural studies discourse. However, as Robbins points out, this continued reification of marginality and autonomy disables rather than encourages attempts to critically engage with the issue of the professional intellectual while producing debates over the relationship between the intellectual, the political sphere, the state and the market that fail to examine the “necessary ambiguities” of the intellectual’s inevitably institutionally-grounded state or “to specify the possibilities and the entanglements of exercised power.”

What I want to examine in my discussion of Grossberg and Ross’ intellectual practices, then, is the ways in which these figures put into question the use value and validity of this lingering and deep rooted conception that professionalism and progressive intellectualism are somehow oxymoronic. Instead, I want to think about the ways in which it is possible to imagine a politics of professionalism in relation to leftist intellectual work. Implicit in this critique is a problematisation of the originary myths of cultural studies and in particular the reification of the alienated figure of the lone intellectual bucking the system. Despite the fact that cultural studies scholarship itself is often radically contextual, emphasising the cultural specificity of theory itself and discouraging the use of universalising theoretical frameworks, as I have argued, there is a certain tendency within cultural studies discourse to privilege the working class “organic” intellectual as a kind of universal blueprint for progressive intellectual work. As my discussion of the legacy of the cultural front suggests, in the United States, a class-based intellectual practice draws on a very different set of cultural, political and intellectual experiences from those of the British academy’s “scholarship boys.” And, likewise, in a contemporary setting where cultural and identity-based concerns rather than class politics are the order of the day, I would suggest that an unreconstructed version of

Birmingham School intellectualism would have little cultural or political utility for cultural studies practitioners wanting to engage with contemporary American culture.

Thus, in the next section I briefly discuss the way in which Grossberg has sought to reshape the intellectual practices of cultural studies so that they take into account, rather than evade, the inevitable tension between the progressive intellectual and political concerns of cultural studies and the more conservative institutional and disciplinary framework in which the majority of contemporary US cultural studies practitioners operate. Recognising the obsolescence of models of intellectualism premised upon institutional or disciplinary autonomy, his work emphasises the need to critically engage with the professional modes of regulation that increasingly govern American intellectual life. While Ross’ intellectual practice, as I discuss later, is marked by an engagement with multiple public spheres, and an investment in political praxis that calls up Sartrean as well as Gramscian intellectual ideals, Grossberg’s career represents, I would argue, that of the more archetypal, academicised US intellectual, and in this sense, offers a particularly acute insight into the possibilities of a radicalised, academically-based approach to intellectual politics.

i. Professing Cultural Studies

While Grossberg, as I have discussed, has often looked to British cultural studies for theoretical, political and moral guidance, his own approach to cultural studies reveals a scepticism towards some of the primary models of intellectualism that have underpinned its project. In particular, much of Grossberg’s work suggests that the British nostalgia for an intellectual practice that is organic to the “people” and that, at that the same time, maintains a distance from institutional ties, has little relevance to an American setting where the relations between intellectuals and political or social constituencies are best thought of in terms of articulation rather than organicism, and where much of its intellectual culture operates within academic institutions (and closely related spheres like publishing).

Grossberg’s own intellectual identity as a cultural studies practitioner who has embraced his role as a “traditional academic” involves a radical reworking of the traditional notion of the cultural studies intellectual. Implicit in Grossberg’s self-consciously academicised cultural
studies work is a critique of the claims to autonomy that often underpin openly politicised intellectual work. This criticism extends to the genealogical roots of cultural studies itself, and, in particular, to the now canonical originary narrative in which cultural studies is characterised as an extra-institutional formation, a narrative that implies that the politicised intellectual must operate outside of the structures of academic professionalism. Challenging Stuart Hall’s characterisation of his move to the CCCS as a “retreat” from the “dirty outside world of politics,” Grossberg argues in contrast that the move into the academy, the move to a “politics by other means,” was itself constitutive of cultural studies at least in its British (and I would add U.S.) articulations. That is, cultural studies is a rigorous intellectual—even academic—practice that seeks to produce better knowledge of the political context of the world, knowledge that opens up new and hopefully progressive possibilities of struggle and transformation.  

By suggesting that this moment of “retreat” into the world of academia was a formative one for British cultural studies, Grossberg not only attempts to question the notion that American cultural studies is somehow a tainted version of its “authentic” and autonomous British counterpart, he offers up the possibility of a cultural studies practice in which the institutional reality of its existence as a field of knowledge is a self-conscious feature of its politics. Grossberg’s academicised intellectual practice thus puts into question a number of the basic premises underpinning traditional conceptions of the role and status of the cultural studies intellectual. Crucially, he interrogates the notion that to be politically relevant the intellectual must directly intervene in affairs of the state or polity, arguing that, within the realm of culture and cultural production, political effects are often not immediately apparent. Thus, according to Grossberg’s articulatory model of cultural practice, the political effectivity of the pedagogical and scholarly labours of an academically located cultural theorist is more likely to be characterised as unpredictable and rhizomatic rather than direct and causal.

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398 Grossberg’s own self-description in contrasting himself with the public intellectual status of figures like Meaghan Morris and Stuart Hall. Grossberg, Personal interview.
399 Grossberg, Bringing it all Back Home 274.
400 Grossberg, We Gotta Get Out of This Place 20.
It follows that, in reformulating “the possible political role of the intellectual,” there is little point in looking to traditional definitions or frameworks. Instead, just as Grossberg’s work shifts the discourse of cultural studies beyond its Kantian foundations, it also necessitates a new vocabulary of intellectual practice that takes into account the institutional contexts of intellectual work as well as the specific functions of cultural studies practitioners. As Grossberg suggests

[c]ultural studies...offers a different model of intellectual politics: neither the organic intellectual, who has an already existing relation to an already existing constituency, nor the specific intellectual, who can only construct local and temporary constituencies based entirely on his or her expertise. Cultural studies attempts at least to construct a more flexible, more pragmatic, more modest, and more contextual model of the political function of the intellectual, connecting to, constructing, and reconstructing its conjunctural constituency. Cultural studies thinks constituencies are made, not given in advance.

Grossberg’s own approach to intellectual practice, then, matches the radical contextuality of his theory. The intellectual’s role is formulated in the process of its active articulation with the specific context of intellectual practice and with the specific audiences and constituencies linked to those contexts. Thus, Grossberg’s “articulated” intellectual can be thought of as a combination of Foucauldian specificity and pragmatism. However, unlike the bureaucratic model of specific intellectualism championed by cultural policy theorists like Tony Bennett (whose work Grossberg draws upon while remaining critical of what he sees as Bennett’s rather narrow reading of Foucault), Grossberg’s intellectual embraces the radical possibilities of theoreticism and intellectualism while his articulated intellectual is politically strategic rather than purely utilitarian. The kind of Foucauldianism suggested by Grossberg’s own intellectual practice is less concerned with public spheres and state structures than with the micropolitical effects of radical knowledge production and pedagogy. At the same time, Grossberg is a pragmatist working within a professionalised, disciplinary structure who uses his institutional credentials to move beyond those structures, working within the realm of disciplinarity to create critical, inter-disciplinary sites.

401 Grossberg, We Gotta Get Out of This Place 20.
402 Grossberg, Bringing it all Back Home 379-380.
In contrast, Ross uses his academic location as a means of moving into other spheres of political action, and is, in this sense, more attuned to the Birmingham School model of intellectualism modelled by someone like Hall than is Grossberg. Like Grossberg, however, Ross is concerned with actively engaging with the complex institutional and political realities of intellectual life in the United States and with taking seriously his role as a professional intellectual. Furthermore, while his intellectual politics has its roots firmly planted in the progressive concerns of the American left, the various intellectual roles and practices that Ross has adopted in his academic career and writings have not been bound to any essentialist or organicist notion of the role of the progressive intellectual. Rather than allying himself in advance to any one social movement, political cause or intellectual stance, Ross’ intellectual modus operandi is strategic and pragmatic, enabling him to articulate his intellectual practice to various discursive and political formations, from science and technology to the environmental movement to labour relations in the culture industries. In the next part of the discussion, then, I want to outline some of the theoretical concerns behind Ross’ strategic model of intellectualism before going on to examine a specific example of Ross’ work.

ii. A “Socialist Strategy” for Intellectual Practice

While Ross devotes a minimal amount of space in his work to discussing his role as a cultural studies intellectual, preferring to practice rather than explicitly theorise cultural studies, I would argue that many of his writings are grounded in a specific set of political and intellectual concerns. The title of his recently published collection of essays on issues of cultural justice, *Real Love*, for instance, provides some insight into Ross’ intellectual politics. Introducing the essays in the book with a discussion of the dancehall experience in Jamaica and the complex codes of meaning that structure the behaviour of performers and audiences alike, Ross notes that the performance of “realness” is an important component of a vocalist’s appeal to an audience not only as a sign of authenticity but because “it also records performers’ awareness that theatricality has roots in social and economic conditions.”

Ross uses this notion of “realness” to capture the complexity of his own approach to the issues of cultural justice dealt with in the book (and, I would argue, to issues of culture in general). More specifically, for Ross, a crucial feature of the “realness” of cultural studies is

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404 Andrew Ross, *Real Love* 2.
the recognition that the spheres of economics and culture, the social and the everyday are inextricably interwoven, a situation which puts into question the validity of analyses that privilege one term over the other. The term “real,” then, ironically performs and problematises the dividing line operating in much social and cultural theory between the apparently material reality of the economic world and the flimsy, superstructural realm of culture.

Ross’ ethnographically-inflected opening description of the Jamaican dancehall offers a statement about the materiality of culture itself and the importance of theorising from the ground up rather than imposing a totalising theoretical blueprint onto the messy reality of cultural experience. Accordingly, in describing the essays in *Real Love* as “case studies,” Ross contends that “the arguments they offer arise out of the raw materials of a case history rather than from some preconceived explanatory pattern.” His preference for the case study suggests that the kind of “real” intellectual practice Ross is interested in engaging in is necessarily rooted in a pragmatic politics of the everyday. As Ross has recently commented, the ethos guiding his approach to intellectual politics can be summed up by a statement made in the first editorial of *New Left Review* concerning the fact that cultural studies scholars should “meet people where they are rather than telling them where they should be.”

Ross’ approach here places into question the utility of *a priori* theoretical frameworks for progressive cultural and social criticism, and accordingly, in his own cultural analysis he uses theory in a limited and strategic fashion. Nevertheless, it is possible to describe his work as being underpinned by a fairly consistent theoretical or philosophical approach to cultural criticism and intellectual politics. As I suggested earlier, obviously an important genealogical precursor for the kind of Marxist-inflected, engagement with American popular culture that characterises much of Ross’ writing is the kind of pragmatic Marxism that constituted the intellectual and political heart of the Popular Front and that provided a leftist, culturalist legacy for progressive American studies scholars (and others). I would suggest, however, that Ross’ work can also be seen as being affiliated with the kind of European “post-Marxist” genealogy associated with figures like Laclau and Mouffe, a “tradition” that both Ross, and, as I note later, Grossberg, have strategically translated into an American

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Ross, *Real Love* 2.
Ross. Telephone interview.
Ross’ intellectual practice, then, draws upon both post-Marxist and pragmatist influences resulting in a distinct and anti-essentialist approach to “doing” cultural studies.

Ross first suggests his affinity with post-Marxism in the introductory section of *Universal Abandon* (1988), a collection of essays on postmodernism edited by him. After reviewing the debates over postmodernism, Ross turns his discussion to the plight of leftist politics in a postmodern age. He comments on the fact that the founding myths of classical Marxism (in particular its faith in an essentially revolutionary working class) have been called into question by the fragmentation of the old left in the face of the pluralist politics of the new social movements. In contrast to the social determinism of classical Marxism, Ross discusses the radical notion forwarded by Laclau and Mouffe in their “prospectus for a postmodernist politics,”

Hegemony and Socialist Strategy (1985). Specifically Laclau and Mouffe argue that no social group has any necessary identification with a particular politics but rather that the links between political interests and social positionality are ones that have to be actively forged or, to use Laclau and Mouffe’s Gramscian inflected terminology, articulated according to the demands of specific political contexts or moments. While Ross notes that this radically contextual and contingent approach to politics has impacted on the way the politics of racism, sexism and homophobia have been played out, he argues that, for much of the left, Capital is still seen “as a supremely rational and monolithic, domination-producing system,”

a conception that severely limits our understanding of the complex and nuanced workings of capitalism in a postindustrial world. Like Laclau and Mouffe, Ross suggests that if the contemporary left are to have any impact on the postmodern political landscape they must actively engage with, rather than merely refuse, the hegemonic discourses of consumer capitalism. As Ross contends

> it is unrealistic to heroicize declarations of immunity to the contagious forms of the commodity world when so much of our social lives is lived as consumers. We simply cannot afford to take the high ground if our popular culture and everyday life, saturated as they are with the effects of commodification, are to be important sites of

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407 Of note here is the fact that Ross’ early training in cultural theory (at the University of Kent where he completed his PhD) was very much influenced by the Screen school of structuralism.


409 Ross, *Universal Abandon* xiv.
contestation, and if new and popular images of modern, material life are to be constructed.\textsuperscript{410}

Under attack here in Ross’ analysis is what Laclau and Mouffe see as the “fundamental obstacle” to the reform of “the political imaginary of the left,” that is, the problem of “essentialist apriorism, the conviction that the social is sutured at some point, from which it is possible to fix the meaning of any event independently of any articulatory practice.”\textsuperscript{411} In contrast to this rigid and deterministic view of the social, Ross argues that in order to understand, and therefore politically intervene in, the discourses of everyday life under consumer capitalism, we need an approach that recognises the “instability of ideological process.”\textsuperscript{412} As he goes on to assert, “it is precisely because this instability is most palpably felt at the level of everyday life that a postmodernist politics must complete the Gramscian move to extend the political into all spheres, domains and practices of our culture. Everything is contestable; nothing is off-limits; and no outcomes are guaranteed. These are the conditions of a ‘philosophy of praxis’.”\textsuperscript{413}

The central point in Ross’ argument here is that the left (and here his argument also holds true for progressive intellectuals) will be unable to enter into the hegemonic struggle for a radical democracy unless it rejects a transcendent model of politics and instead recognises that the cultural processes of the everyday constitute a crucial political site. Ross concludes, again in a Gramscian inflected mode, that if the left is to engage with the “common sense” discourses circulating within popular culture and to transform them for oppositional ends (a theme that recurs time and time again in Ross’ later writings), it needs to break once and for all with the dystopianism that marks classical Marxist encounters with the popular. In particular, Ross suggests that the conception of popular culture as merely an ideological front veiling the essentially economic determination of the social must be replaced by an understanding of popular or everyday culture as a complex set of discursive articulations which have concrete social and political effects.\textsuperscript{414}

\textbf{iii. Contesting Discourses: Rearticulating the Politics of Technoculture}

\textsuperscript{410} Ross, \textit{Universal Abandon} xv.
\textsuperscript{411} Laclau and Mouffe 177.
\textsuperscript{412} Ross, \textit{Universal Abandon} xv.
\textsuperscript{413} Ross, \textit{Universal Abandon} xv.
It is this “philosophy of praxis,” a philosophy that has a certain affinity with the more populist concerns of American Marxism, but which radically repackages those concerns within the post-Marxist discourse of articulation and hegemony, that frames much of Ross’ engagement with popular cultural forms. In this next section, I examine the ways in which Ross puts into practice his concern with confronting and intervening in hegemonic discursive formations, that is with practising a “real,” grassroots intellectual politics, by discussing one of the critical areas which Ross deals with in his writings, namely the discourse of science and technology.

Ross’ concern with the kinds of dominant discourses circulating within the American national-popular imagination has seen him engaging with the ways in which science and technology have come to play an increasingly central role in everyday culture. In the introduction to *Strange Weather*, Ross opens with an anecdote about a humorous notice placed on an office photocopier in which the machine is variously represented as a technocratic overlord and a labour saving device. Ross uses the anecdote to set up one of the central concerns of *Strange Weather*, namely, the impact of science and technology on our everyday lives and the kinds of explanatory models we use to deal with this.

In particular, *Strange Weather* brings together a series of essays concerned with the kinds of critical or progressive possibilities that such models might offer. Thus, Ross discusses the way the problems and possibilities of science are played out through popular discourses such as the New Age movement, Science Fiction and Cyberculture. Rather than celebrating these popular movements as “pure” forms of resistance, however, Ross argues that these oppositional discourses are not only defined in relation to, but are thoroughly caught up in, the hegemonic structures of scientific discourse. Oppositional movements, it seems, are necessarily articulated to the structures of power that they seek to resist.

For Ross, this is a lesson that needs to be learned by the political and intellectual left, a group whose response to the rise of science and technology has been inadequate in a number of ways. Discussing the intertwined nature of the culture of the humanities and the sciences in

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414 Ross, *Universal Abandon* xvi-xvii.
contemporary American society, he argues that “it is high time that cultural critics, often
typecast as technophobes, played more of a techno-literate role.” Rather than attempting
to maintain the fiction of autonomy, Ross, echoing the post-Marxist directive to intervene in
hegemonic culture, argues that leftist critics must actively engage with the technoculture in
which they live and work if they are to effectively challenge and transform the limited visions
of the future that circulate within that culture.

Paralleling Dennings’ concern with historicising the recent turn to “left culturalism” within
American (cultural) studies, Ross reviews the history of the engagement between progressive
political movements and the discourse of science and technology in the United States,
arguing that the American left needs to recognise and embrace a genealogy other than that of
Thoreau’s *Walden* with its preindustrial fantasies, and instead should attempt to articulate
their concerns to a progressive futurism. In order to construct alternative visions of the
future, Ross contends that the American left needs to remind itself of those traditions that
“saw technology as an ally of progress and democracy.” Discussing the leftist futurist
movements of the 30s, he suggests that the “future” was “[o]nce considered the home of
progressive thought.” However, the progressive possibilities of futurism dissipated as the
discourse of technocracy was increasingly articulated to bureaucratic forms of knowledge
rather than the culture of intellectual rationalism championed by the progressive left. As a
consequence, Ross shows that the “future,” as a crucial site in the cultural and political
imaginary, “has been occupied by corporate and military interests for most of the postwar
period.” For Ross, the task at hand, then, is for the left to recapture discourses of futurism
and to rearticulate the language of science and technology to progressivist beliefs and
concerns.

In order to take up a position of empowerment in relation to the discourses of technological
development, however, the left must reject its reliance on the dualistic notion of cooption
versus resistance that has tended to organise its thinking in relation to engaging with
hegemonic structures and discourses. In this way, Ross’ chapter on cyberculture,
oppositional politics and the role of the computer hacker, in *Strange Weather*, suggests a

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418 Ross, *Strange Weather* 135.
419 Ross, *Strange Weather* 135.
Ross discusses the ways in which the hacker’s knowledge of computer systems can be used to disrupt military and corporate information systems and goes on to suggest that the figure of the hacker offers an alternative metaphor for conceptualising praxis for leftist intellectuals and activists. Arguing that cultural critics need to actively understand the discourses of science and technology in order to create alternative uses for technoculture, Ross suggests that what critics need to attempt to grasp is “something like a hacker’s knowledge.”

Ross’ emphasis on the centrality of technoliteracy to contemporary cultural criticism highlights the problems associated with the left’s fetishisation of “outsider” status. While the left’s autonomous, anti-professional intellectual is able to maintain a critical stance in relation to the institutions of hegemonic culture, this figure has minimal utility when it comes to engaging with, and thereby transforming the discursive relations of that culture. Instead, a post-Marxist understanding of hegemonic culture as contingent and contested is central to Ross’ intellectual practice. As Laclau and Mouffe contend, within a post-Marxist framework “[t]he political meaning of a local community movement, of an ecological struggle, of a sexual minority movement, is not given from the beginning: it crucially depends upon its hegemonic articulation with other struggles and demands.”

In other words, the discourses of science and technology, while historically tied to hegemonic military-industrial interests, are not necessarily universally oppressive systems of knowledge but rather can be re-articulated to radical democratic ideals. In the introduction to his more recent contribution to the science and technology debates, *Science Wars*, Ross suggests just such a progressive rearticulation of the discourse of science. Summarising recent critiques of the paradigm of scientific objectivity, Ross notes that one of the crucial problems with so-called objective scientific data is that it is produced in laboratory type settings that are very different from the complex social contexts in which the results of scientific research are subsequently applied. While scientists contend that knowledge can only be “objective” by excluding social and cultural influences from the research process (a goal that many critics

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420 Ross, *Strange Weather* 100.
421 Laclau and Mouffe 87.
422 Ross has also pointed out that apparently progressive social movements can be rearticulated to the needs of conservative politics. See his discussion of the adoption by the US military of some of the discourses of environmentalism in Andrew Ross, “A Few Good Species,” *Science Wars*, ed. Andrew Ross (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996) 311-319.
have shown is impossible as all knowledge production is inevitably embedded in some kind of socio-cultural context), Ross argues, to the contrary, that the distance between the “culture” of the laboratory setting in which scientific knowledge tends to be produced and the everyday sites in which these laboratory derived knowledges are put into practice is in itself irrational. For Ross, “rational” forms of knowledge are those knowledges that are culturally and socially relevant. Accordingly, he argues that the knowledge possessed by the worker or farmer who deals with practical forms of science everyday should be valued just as much as the technical expertise of the lab scientist. This emphasis on the need to value “everyday” forms of knowledge, however, is not merely a tool for deconstructing the objective claims of scientific knowledge by revealing that its production is also just as context specific and therefore socially constructed as any other form of knowledge. Rather, for Ross, “it must be joined by insistence on methodological reform—to involve the local experience of users in the research process from the outset and to ensure that the process is shaped less by a manufacturer’s interests than by the needs of communities affected by the product. Such methodological reform will lead from cultural relativism to social rationality.”

Ross’ statement, however, suggests not so much a reform as a radical critique of the basic tenets of scientific knowledge and its dogged faith in truth and objectivity. The scientist’s insistence that rational forms of knowledge can only be produced in a socially neutral environment is premised on a belief that scientific methodology can access objective truths that transcend socio-cultural influences. The charge that traditional scientists have often made in the face of anti-objectivist challenges is that the pragmatic approach to knowledge production championed by critics like Ross will lead to forms of knowledge that are marked by cultural relativism rather than more “authoritative” claim to truth or rationality. In contrast, for Ross, the “truth” value of scientific knowledge should be premised in its social utility, in its ability to respond to a set of context-specific needs (an argument which overlaps with the concerns of philosophical pragmatism). Knowledges grounded in specific socio-cultural contexts and directed towards everyday concerns are not relativist but are socially rational, drawing their authority from their ability to successfully respond to and answer a specific social need rather than asserting their universal applicability.

Central to Ross’ notion of social rationality, then, is a critique of the elitist nature of Western scientific paradigms. His conception of a progressive form of knowledge that arises out of, and in response to, everyday concerns and values, offers a radical challenge to “the universalistic claims maintained on behalf of empirical rationality.”

As Ross has argued here and elsewhere, the authority of claims made by the scientific community to a value-free knowledge are becoming steadily undermined in the face of the increasingly transparent contract between the science industry and global neo-liberal economics. Given the increasingly elitist social agenda of hegemonic scientific discourse, Ross argues that we need to democratise scientific knowledge, that is we need to develop a “science for the people.”

Ross’ encounter with the hegemonic discourse of scientific reason provides an insight, then, into one of the specific ways in which he manages to articulate his cultural criticism to a broader set of intellectual and political problematics. As an intellectual strategically concerned with re-articulating hegemonic discourses to radical democratic concerns, Ross’ encounter with the discourses of science and technology (as in his other critical work) is neither condemnatory nor celebratory. Rather his approach to these issues is marked by a combination of criticality and engagement. Like his intellectual practice as a tenured academic and an activist, Ross does not purport to hold some kind of privileged, transcendent status in relation to the complex and contradictory realm of everyday culture. On the contrary, one of the central features of Ross’ philosophy of praxis is his emphasis on the crucial importance of a realpolitik, that is, a politics in which the intellectual is necessarily caught up in the very cultural processes and discourses under his/her critical scrutiny.

Just as Grossberg has sought to engage with the professional structures of academia by challenging the dominant discourses of communications studies from within its own disciplinary logic, then, Ross’ pragmatic mode of intellectualism involves grappling with, rather than rejecting, the values and myths that structure hegemonic discourses and institutions. Thus, in this particular example, Ross argued that the language of science and technology is not essentially conservative but can be rearticulated to progressivist beliefs and concerns. Likewise, Ross’ philosophy of praxis suggests that the discourse of academic professionalism should not be written off as necessarily antithetical to the political concerns

of cultural studies practitioners. Certainly, what both Grossberg and Ross illustrate is that while it is important to maintain a healthy critique of the hegemonic structures of the academy, it is impossible to separate out the politics of intellectualism from the everyday institutional and professional realities of practising cultural studies.

**Conclusion**

One of the main narratives structuring books like Russell Jacoby’s *The Last Intellectuals: American Culture in The Age of Academe* and Roger Kimball’s *Tenured Radicals: How Politics Has Corrupted Our Higher Education* (as well as a host of other books and articles published within the last decade) is the story of the increasingly professionalised nature of intellectual culture in the United States, a process that for most cultural commentators is characterised as one of intellectual decline. However, as Bruce Robbins has suggested, if we look at the issue of professionalisation from a different angle, that is, if we recognise that this process has also seen the cultural left achieve a significant degree of institutional power in the United States, then this story might be reconfigured as one of gain rather than loss. In the face of the recent attacks on the academic left from conservatives disgruntled by the perceived politicisation of the university curriculum, Robbins’ argument would suggest that, rather than feeling embarrassed about their academic status, the cultural left need to fight to hold onto whatever institutional or professional power they have.

As Jameson has pointed out, in the US it is no longer possible to talk about the politics of the academy as if it was sealed off from broader social and cultural concerns. On the contrary, the academy has become a battleground for broader struggles between the left and the right over the meanings of cultural rights and values. Given this scenario, I have argued that the anxieties that have accompanied the Americanisation of cultural studies, in particular the concern over its institutionalisation are misplaced. Instead, I have suggested, that if critics were to move away from the anti-institutional vocabulary of British cultural studies and to evaluate the emergence of cultural studies in the United States in terms of its (relative) institutional gains, then a rather different and more complex picture of the role played by cultural studies in America might emerge.

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As I have discussed, the majority of accounts of cultural studies practices within the US academy, in attempting to present a unified critique, have tended to argue that cultural studies emerged in the US in the eighties and was essentially transformed by English and literary studies departments into the latest variant of literary theory. While I have acknowledged the powerful institutional role played by disciplines like English and literary studies in legitimating cultural studies within the US academy, I have questioned the veracity of this rather narrow representation of the developmental history of US cultural studies. Offering an alternative to these traditional representations, I have identified and examined a number of other disciplinary formations and intellectual movements that have laid claim to an American cultural studies genealogy.

However, while I have attempted to present a more complex account of the development of American cultural studies, one which acknowledges the role played by American (rather than solely British) traditions of cultural theory, I have had to draw some limits and have necessarily excluded a number of intellectual traditions that have also recently suggested a genealogical link between their development and that of cultural studies. For example, one of the disciplinary players that I do not discuss here is education, a field that has recently been acknowledged by Grossberg as making an early contribution to the positive reception of American cultural studies.\footnote{Lawrence Grossberg, “Bringing it all Back Home: Pedagogy and Cultural Studies,” \textit{Bringing It All Back Home}\ 374-390.} Like communications, education was one of the first disciplines in the US to read British cultural studies material, with Paul Willis’ \textit{Learning to Labour}\footnote{Paul Willis, \textit{Learning to Labour: How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs} (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977).} not surprisingly playing an important role in progressive education circles. While the discipline of education as a whole has played a fairly minor role in cultural studies since then, in recent years, radical figures within the field such as Henry A. Giroux (who was the only person from education to feature in the \textit{Cultural Studies} collection) have made an important contribution to theorising the relations between cultural studies and critical pedagogy.\footnote{For example, in 1994 Giroux launched a journal dealing with just these issues entitled \textit{The Review of Education/Pedagogy/Cultural Studies}.}

Two other fields that have been linked developmentally with American cultural studies are women’s studies and Afro-American or black studies. As in the UK and Australia, women’s
studies has made a major contribution, particularly from the sixties onwards, to the development of left culturalism in the US. Indeed, Ohmann suggests that the American New Left’s lack of strong labourite connections in the sixties meant that other social movements with roots in the academy like feminism (and black studies) served as important sites for the \( \text{(re)} \)emergence of a leftist cultural studies.\(^430\)) Certainly, women’s studies departments have not only provided crucial interdisciplinary sites for radical forms of cultural practice, feminist scholarship has also broadly impacted on and contributed to the disciplinary development of fields of knowledge crucial to the formation of American cultural studies, such as American studies\(^431\) and literary studies.

Likewise, given “the constitutive role played by race in American culture”\(^432\) it is not surprising that one of the narratives of origin of American cultural studies that has been recently put forward by American cultural theorists is one based in race politics. For instance, Cornel West has suggested, in relation to the contemporary reception of cultural studies in America, that it was not so much a “Marxist moment” but the “academic intervention” that accompanied the rise of Afro-American or black studies in 1969 that paved the way for cultural studies’ institutionalisation within the academy.\(^433\) Furthermore, Kobena Mercer has argued that it was the Afro-American movement that initially fought to make such a space available and that provided the blueprint for radical democratic action based upon identity politics.\(^434\) Thus, given the central role that racial (in particular African-American) politics has played in American cultural life, black studies scholar Mae G. Henderson suggests that, with regards the genealogy of American cultural studies, “the advent of Black Studies was an inaugural moment and remains central to the formation of the contemporary cultural studies project.”\(^435\)

What these alternative genealogies of education, feminist studies and black studies further highlight is both the complexity of the developmental history of cultural theory within US intellectual thought and the problematic nature of reducing discussions of American cultural

\(^{430}\) Ohmann 12.
\(^{431}\) May 189-190.
\(^{433}\) West 694.
studies to one “story,” in particular, that of the academicisation and depoliticisation of British cultural studies. Through discussing three disciplinary moments in the development of American cultural studies and focusing on the specific intellectual practices and politics of two American cultural studies scholars, I have suggested a more contested and pluralised narrative. My emphasis on the unique role played by these various disciplinary and intellectual formations, however, was also part of a deliberate strategy to specify the discourse of American cultural studies, that is, to translate it from a globalising, imperialising abstraction into a concrete, national formation. The next chapter of my thesis discusses another nationally-based cultural studies formation, namely Australian cultural studies, a “field” that given its location in a rather marginal, Western nation-state bears a somewhat different and arguably more instructive relationship than its American counterpart to the processes of globalisation impacting on cultural studies.

PART THREE
LOCATED COSMOPOLITANISM: MEAGHAN MORRIS AND THE POLITICS OF AUSTRALIAN CULTURAL STUDIES

Introduction

While, as Stratton and Ang have pointed out, the term “international cultural studies” is used more often than not to mask the universalising tendencies of Anglo-American cultural studies discourses, it should be noted that the shift towards a more internationalised model of cultural studies has witnessed to some degree the recognition of various cultural studies sites outside or on the margins of the geo-political “centre.” One such site is Australia whose distinctive style of cultural studies has over the past decade gained considerable visibility within the “international” cultural studies community; a process evidenced by the inclusion of numerous Australian cultural studies figures on the editorial committees of journals such as the International Journal of Cultural Studies and Cultural Studies, as well as the “export” over the last couple of years of a number of Australian or Australian-based cultural studies practitioners (including John Frow, John Hartley, Tony Bennett, Marcus Breen and Toby Miller) to Britain and the US.

Arguably the most prominent Australian cultural studies practitioner is the Sydney-based cultural critic Meaghan Morris, a figure who is known internationally not only as a cultural studies theorist but who also has considerable international status within the fields of feminism, film criticism and cultural geography. While Morris has worked across a number of disciplines and fields and in particular has been associated with the area of cultural studies in Australia, she has played an important role in forging links with other national cultural studies sites such as America and more recently Asia, while the global profile of her work has helped place Australian cultural studies on the international map.

Morris’ intellectual biography is a particularly interesting one, not only because of the international and interdisciplinary nature of her intellectual practices, but also because she has conducted her somewhat atypical intellectual career in a diversity of institutional settings ranging from the mass media to public broadcasting to the editorial boards of small journals and avant-garde publishing presses. Furthermore, while she has described herself as a “free-
lance writer,“436 a considerable part of Morris’ intellectual work has been carried out in the US where, in the face of a lack of research funding in Australia, she has managed to obtain a significant amount of academic “patronage” and financial support for her research and writing via academically-based fellowships and the academic lecture circuit.

As an intellectual whose career has been marked by a large degree of mobility between disciplines, geographic locations and institutional affiliations, Morris’ writings are perhaps not surprisingly characterised by a tendency to foreground the issues of intellectual location. In this chapter I argue that these themes are also central to the broader field of Australian cultural studies and that an examination of Morris’ work and career can provide a powerful insight into the way in which the field as a whole has been defined by both the tensions and affinities between academic and non-academic sites of intellectual production, and a self-conscious awareness of Australia’s somewhat eccentric location within a larger geo-political community. Furthermore, I use this discussion to shed some light on the broader debates within the international cultural studies community on the politics of cultural location; in particular, through my discussion of Morris and Australian cultural studies, I interrogate the recent shift within cultural theory towards cosmopolitan models of intellectual practice and ask what this shift might suggest for nationally-based cultural studies formations. I argue that one of the modes of intellectual practice that Morris has adopted over the years is that of the located or grounded cosmopolitan, and that this particular approach is useful for imagining an internationalist cultural studies project that is able to account for national, regional and local specificities, as well as their differences and inequalities.

Accordingly, this chapter is structured as follows: in the first section I briefly discuss the recent “turn” to cosmopolitanism within cultural theory before going on to outline some of the debates that have emerged around constructing a genealogical narrative for Australian cultural studies. In the second section I discuss Morris’ intellectual biography and some of the intellectual and political movements that have impacted both on Morris and on the development of a specific (Sydney and to some extent Melbourne-based) strain of Australian cultural studies. I focus in particular on the influence that both transnational and transinstitutional modes of intellectual production have played in the formation of what is both a strongly cosmopolitan and a distinctly Australian field of knowledge. In the third

section I examine some of the intellectual models found in Morris’ writing, in particular, those models that are underpinned by a politics of grounded mobility. I then conclude the chapter by returning to the opening theme of national/local versus cosmopolitan culture, briefly examining the politics of race in Australia as a way of thinking through a situated politics of internationalism that takes into account the ongoing importance of nationalism.

I. LOCALISM/NATIONALISM/GLOBALISM: A TRANS-NATIONAL GENEALOGY OF AUSTRALIAN CULTURAL STUDIES

i. The Rise of Cosmopolitanism

Before I go on to discuss the ways in which Morris’ mobile, international intellectual career has contributed to, and mirrored the wider development of Australian cultural studies, I want to frame my account by briefly referring to the debates within contemporary cultural theory over the interrelated issues of transnationalism, globalism and cosmopolitanism. These debates have emerged, in particular, out of a critique of the ideology of nationalism. The recent events in Eastern Europe, where the rise of nationalism has been marked by a virulent politics of ethnic absolutism, have fuelled concerns that all forms of nationalism are accompanied by a tendency towards the suppression of cultural difference. These anxieties concerning the utility of nationalism as a conceptual framework for (to paraphrase Benedict Anderson437) “imagining” communities within the contemporary world have been accompanied by related critiques of the nation-state itself. Arjun Appadurai, for example, has argued that “the nation-state as a complex modern political form, is on its last legs”438 and is increasingly being displaced by “more dispersed and diverse forms of transnational allegiance and affiliation.”439 As Anthony D. Smith—summarising the debates over nationalism versus globalism—argues, one of the central contentions of anti-nationalists like Appadurai is that the rise of “new transnational forces,” as evidenced by the emergence of “regional power blocs, transnational economic corporations and global telecommunications

439 Appadurai 20.
systems,”\textsuperscript{440} has seen the once foundational nation-state increasingly replaced by “a new cosmopolitan culture.”\textsuperscript{441}

This notion that we are moving towards a more cosmopolitan, globalised culture, along with the critiques of nationalism that have accompanied it, obviously has major implications for the way in which we frame cultural studies and its intellectual practices. For instance, what Gayatri Spivak terms “transnational cultural studies”\textsuperscript{442} appears to move beyond the kind of comparative, inter-nationalist approach that I have utilised in my thesis in the sense that what forms the basis of a transnational cultural studies are cosmopolitan political and cultural formations that place into question the primacy of the nation. While not necessarily discounting the role of the nation in global affairs, the debates raised by the recent publication of edited collections such as Fredric Jameson and Masao Miyoshi’s \textit{The Cultures of Globalization}\textsuperscript{443} and Pheng Cheah and Bruce Robbins’ \textit{Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling Beyond the Nation} represent a significant shift within contemporary cultural theory away from the assumption of a unity between nationalism and culture. In particular, this shift can be characterised as a turn towards conceptualising culture in terms of the lexicon of travel and mobility rather than that of fixity and belonging. James Clifford’s influential essay “Traveling Cultures,” for example, looks to “cultures of displacement and transplantation” in order to think through the possibilities of a “comparative cultural studies.”\textsuperscript{444} Similarly, Paul Rabinow in attempting to reconceptualise the role and status of the contemporary intellectual, suggests that we look to the now ubiquitous experience of living “in-between” cultures as a means of forging a “critical cosmopolitan” identity.\textsuperscript{445}

This revitalisation of the notion of cosmopolitanism in terms of thinking about culture and identity in the contemporary world has, according to Robbins, seen the term move significantly away from its original conception as a state of “detachment from the bonds,


\textsuperscript{441} Smith 157.


\textsuperscript{444} James Clifford, “Traveling Cultures,” \textit{Cultural Studies} 108.
commitments, and affiliations that constrain ordinary nation-bound lives” towards a more situated or “rooted” cosmopolitanism. At the same time, the “cosmopolitics” that Robbins sets out to define here is critical of the “romantic localism of a certain portion of the left who feels it must counter capitalist globalization with a strongly rooted and exclusive sort of belonging.” In particular, Robbins is critical of the notion that a grassroots politics has to be fought out at the level of the national and that “to pass outside the borders of one’s nation... is to wallow in a privileged and irresponsible detachment.” His conception of cosmopolitics, then, seeks to take critical leftism beyond this notion of national organicity in order to explore the “domain of contested politics” offered by a more globalised, cosmopolitan perspective.

What interests me about these debates is the way in which the turn to cosmopolitan approaches to culture not only suggests a new mode of conceptualising contemporary intellectual practices in what has become an increasingly internationalised field, but also offers an alternative way of framing the developmental history of cultural studies. While my discussions of the genealogical development of British and American cultural studies have largely been situated within a nationalist context, albeit a contested one, in my examination of the relationship between Morris’ intellectual biography and the broader genealogy of Australian cultural studies I shift my analytic framework somewhat. In particular, in this chapter I want to counterbalance my discussion of the local and national processes out of which Australian cultural studies emerged to become a unique and distinctive member of the international cultural studies community by also focusing on the transnational processes that have contributed to the formation of this field. Thus, the account of the developmental influences on both Morris and Australian cultural studies that follows examines local, national and transnational processes. Rather than adopting an either/or model of grounded localism versus free-floating globalism, my discussion of Morris as a cultural studies practitioner distinguished by her intellectual mobility picks up on the “new” model of cosmopolitanism referred to by Robbins. That is, the framework through which I analyse

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Morris’ intellectual career and writings as well as some of the formative moments in Australian cultural studies owes itself to a kind of grounded or located cosmopolitanism. Furthermore, I want to expand this model of cosmopolitanism in order to conceptualise mobile forms of intellectual practice not only in transnational terms but also as a means of thinking though the transinstitutional forms of intellectual mobility that, as we will see, have been central to both Morris’ development as an intellectual and to the formation of Australian cultural studies itself.

ii. Contesting Colonialisms: “International” Versus Australian Cultural Studies

Before I go on to trace Morris’ “cosmopolitan” intellectual biography, however, I want to contextualise my account of the development of Australian cultural studies and, in particular, my focus on the transnational and culturally hybridised elements within this field in relation to some of the broader debates over the history of Australian cultural studies. Despite its increasing international status there have been surprisingly few attempts to construct a coherent account of the development of Australian cultural studies. In a recent article, for example, Andrew Milner accused Australian cultural studies of suffering from an historical amnesia about its own developmental past.450 I would suggest that there are a number of complex reasons why Australian critics have in the main been reticent about providing a definitive historical account of Australian cultural studies not the least of which is the fact that, unlike its British counterpart, Australian cultural studies appears to lack the kinds of clear cut historical precedents and narrative elements (provided by the Leavises, the Birmingham School and heroic figures like Hall) that are necessary to construct a convincing and coherent “myth of origins.” Those theorists (including Milner) who have attempted to chart some kind of developmental history of Australian cultural studies have suggested a range of possible formative narratives variously organised around the role of disciplinary formations such as history, literary studies and film theory,451 and communication and media studies,452 the contribution made by Australian journal culture,453 the WEA, and the figure of

451 See Graeme Turner, “‘It Works For Me’: British Cultural Studies, Australian Cultural Studies, Australian Film,” Cultural Studies 640-653.
452 See Peter Goodall, High Culture, Popular Culture: The Long Debate (St Leonards, Australia: Allen and Unwin, 1995) 152.
the journalist-critic; the connections between Australian feminism, French philosophy, and Australian cultural studies; and the importance of Australian cultural historiography as a crucial antecedent to contemporary Australian cultural studies.

Apart from the internal diversity of Australian cultural studies, and its varied influences and sites of development, another reason why theorists have been wary of “mapping” out a genealogy of the field is because of the fraught relationship between Australian and British cultural studies. In their introduction to *Australian Cultural Studies: A Reader* (1993), the first anthology of Australian cultural theory to be organised under the general rubric of cultural studies, John Frow and Meaghan Morris attack the “genre” of the genealogy pointing to its tendency to reduce the complex and unique developmental history of Australian cultural studies to a kind of colonial version of British cultural studies. Supporting Frow and Morris’ critique of the genealogical format, early attempts to historicise cultural studies in Australia (such as Susan Dermody, John Docker and Drusilla Modjeska’s discussion of Australian cultural studies in their 1982 edited collection *Nellie Melba, Ginger Meggs and Friends: Essays in Australian Cultural History*, and Jim Davidson and John Sinclair’s account published in 1986 under the title *Australian Cultural Studies = Birmingham + Meanjin OK?*) have often been structured around theoretical debates and models borrowed from British cultural studies. While more recent accounts have presented a more complex and contested view of the evolution of cultural theory within an Australian context, these accounts have nevertheless also tended to rely on the history of British cultural studies as the baseline against which Australia, as its colonial and cultural offshoot, is measured.

As a number of critics have pointed out, while there are obviously parallels between the developmental histories of British and Australian cultural studies, not enough attention has been paid to the rather different cultural, national and social contexts out of which these two

454 See Frow and Morris xxv-xxvi.
457 Frow and Morris xxiii
fields of knowledge emerged. Graeme Turner, a leading Australian cultural theorist, has, in a number of recent articles, attacked the universalising tendencies that have accompanied the globalisation of cultural studies and has, in turn, argued for the need for nationally-specific accounts of cultural studies and its development. Commenting on the recent emergence of a number of genealogies of cultural studies, he argues that what is missing from these historical narratives is an awareness of their own cultural specificity. Accordingly, within Anglo-American accounts of the emergence of cultural studies “there is little recognition of a north/south divide, a first world/second world split (let alone any account of the third world), or of the neo-imperialist operation of cultural studies’ knowledges—an operation which is entirely consonant with the political histories of the nations producing them.”

For Turner, British versions of cultural studies tend to naturalise and thereby universalise modes of analysis that have emerged in response to features peculiar to British culture. Thus, the tendency to privilege class analysis over gender or race-based concerns, or to position questions of the popular always in an implicit relation to the “culture and civilisation” tradition, generates a number of problems when translated to an Australian setting where class relations and the divide between high and low culture have quite different histories. For example, the radicality of a classic early British cultural studies text like E. P. Thompson’s *The Making of the English Working Class* derives from its claim to rewrite history “from below” in the face of the cultural hegemony of the English bourgeoisie. However, as Turner

459 See Milner, “Cultural Studies and Cultural Hegemony.” Also see Goodall.
462 Turner, “‘It Works For Me’,” 641. Note that claims by critics like Morris and Turner that the high/low culture debate was nowhere as central to the development of Australian culture as it was in Britain need to be read against the concerns expressed by leading Australian public figures in the fifties regarding the deleterious impact of American mass culture. See Raymond Evans, “‘Buddy Can You Spare a Paradigm?’ Popular Cultural Studies in Australian History,” *Journal of Popular Culture* 29 (1995): 163-174. Furthermore, Paul Washington argues that “[i]n Australia the dominant modes of writing Australian history, particularly those concerned with Australian cultural development, have located the tension between high and popular traditions as the engine of history.” See Paul Washington, “Back to the Future: A Present History of Cultural Studies,” *Southern Review* 30.2 (1997): 235.
points out, traditional white Australian histories have often been histories from below; narratives in which various subordinated groups (the digger, the squatter, the convict) have fought a (losing) battle against the forces of colonisation.

Indeed, as Turner goes on to point out, while British writers in the fifties sought to contest and overturn the dominant myths of cultural history, Australian historians like Russel Ward and his book *The Australian Legend* (1958) contributed to the creation of a series of powerful Australian myths that were subsequently “installed as the dominant articulation of national identity,” exclusionary narratives of Australian identity that reified a “conservative, masculinist, nationalist, anti-authoritarian ethos which honours manual labour, is sceptical of the intellect, and which proudly sees itself as essentially working class.” Thus, within the context of an Australian cultural history where narratives of identity organised around indigeneity or gender have been marginalised by a hegemonic mythology of egalitarian “mateship,” the Birmingham school’s reification of working class narratives of resistance and subordination seems somewhat out of place. Furthermore, Turner has questioned the importation of hegemonic notions of the “national” from an English culture where nationalism (especially in the wake of Thatcherism) has tended to be associated with the political right to an Australian setting where nationhood has always been a hotly contested cultural issue and has largely been associated with labourite politics.

Turner’s critique of the universalism implicit in Anglo-American versions of cultural studies and its developmental history suggests the importance of local, “alternative” histories of cultural studies that challenge these tendencies towards ethnocentrism. However, as I have suggested in my discussion of cosmopolitanism, there are a number of problems with discussing Australian cultural studies as a field unified around purely national terms. As Ien Ang and John Stratton have argued in an article on the “asianization” of Australia, one of the drawbacks of a nationally-based approach to Australian cultural studies is that it tends to

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465 Turner, “‘It Works for Me’,” 644.
lead to a preoccupation with the internal dynamics of nationhood while marginalising issues such as the question of regionalism. For instance, they note that Australia’s cultural identity is marked by significant state and regional variations; variations that are seldom dealt with in the critical discourse Australian cultural studies.\footnote{Ang and Stratton 25.} Furthermore, while figures like Turner locate Australian within an ex-British, post-colonial framework, such a framework does not always allow for the kind of complex, transnationalist approach in which other identities, such as Australia’s increasingly important role within South-East Asia, can be taken into account.\footnote{Ang and Stratton 24-25.}

The discussion that follows attempts to *foreground* rather than smooth over some of these problems by utilising a cosmopolitan model of culture. As in my analysis of British cultural studies, I work to problematise essentialist understandings of the national by linking Morris’ (and in turn Australian cultural studies’) developmental narrative to various transnational intellectual and socio-political forces, although I am less interested here in the much charted territory of British-Australian import-export relations than I am in the less frequently discussed theoretical and cultural exchanges that have occurred between Australia, France and America. Meanwhile, at an intra-national level, I highlight the fact that, in contrast to Britain, the development of Australian cultural studies cannot be traced to one particular intellectual site or centre but, rather, its development has been geographically (as well as institutionally) dispersed. While my account of Australian intellectual culture is largely focused around Sydney (and to a lesser extent Melbourne), it is important to note that more geographically marginal places like Perth (which, as well as being the current base for the Cultural Studies Association of Australia’s journal *Continuum*, was once home to important “institutional” sites such as the *Australian Journal of Cultural Studies* and central figures like John Fiske, John Frow and Graeme Turner) and Brisbane (where the Institute for Cultural Policy Studies is based) have played a defining role in the development of Australian cultural studies’ distinctive style and have, accordingly, contributed significantly to its prominent international status. My focus on Morris, a figure who as I mentioned tends to be associated with Sydney intellectual culture (and more recently with a strand of cultural studies work associated specifically with the University of Technology, Sydney), thus should not be read as an attempt to privilege a particular site as *the* point of origin of Australian cultural studies.
On the contrary, I would contend that the Sydney genealogy represents only one of a number of possible locally-based narratives.

However, while Morris and Frow are, quite rightly I think, critical of the desire for a single coherent genealogy of Australian cultural studies that mimics a kind of British “myth of origin,” I don’t think this argument amounts to a rejection of any kind of historicist approach. On the contrary, if we are to dispel the notion that Australian cultural studies is merely the poor colonial cousin of British cultural studies then there needs to be some attempt made to map out such alternative genealogies. The point is that such attempts must avoid positioning themselves as some kind of “successor genealogy,” replacing those that have gone before, but instead need to self-reflexively acknowledge their own partial (and thus always contestable) status. Furthermore, an important feature of this self-reflexivity involves recognising the “constructed” nature of solely nationally-based accounts of cultural studies. Through focusing on a figure like Morris whose intellectual career is caught up in both local and transnational trajectories, I want to suggest a genealogy for Australian cultural studies that lies somewhere between Ang and Stratton’s anti-nationalist critique and Turner’s counter-nationalism. The following discussion of Morris’ biography and some of the broader political and intellectual movements that have influenced her along the way eschews an either/or, globalised versus nationalist framing of Australian cultural studies, suggesting instead the need for a more hybridised account based upon Robbins’ notion of a situated cosmopolitanism. Thus rather than constructing the global arena as a site of mobility and the national/local as a grounded, static site, the national/local is treated as a pluralised and shifting set of geographic and institutional contexts which in turn intersect with a diversity of transnational arenas.

II. MEAGHAN MORRIS: BIOGRAPHY OF A LOCATED COSMOPOLITAN

i. From Maitland to Sydney Libertarianism

In this section of the chapter I trace some important trajectories in Morris’ intellectual career, connecting these trajectories with some of the social and theoretical movements that have impacted on Australian cultural studies. More broadly I show that like Australian cultural studies itself, Morris’ intellectual oeuvre is formed by, and draws upon, an eclectic range of
influences including semiotics, structuralism and poststructuralism, French theories of the everyday, Australian and “international” feminism(s), film and media theory, urban/spatial theory, economic theory, and cultural policy studies. Moreover, Morris’ intellectual concerns relating to questions of class, geographic, and institutional location and mobility also intersect in a number of generative ways with an Australian cultural studies genealogy marked by the following peculiarities: firstly, its historical relationship with the middle-class constituency underpinning both the New Left and new social movements such as the women’s movement and gay liberation; secondly, the formative role played by trans-national processes of intellectual exchange; and thirdly, the significant contribution made by extra-academic spheres, such as journalism, cultural policy, and the para-academic realm of “alternative” publishing presses and small journals and magazines. In order to gain a sense of the way in which these political, cultural and intellectual formations have impacted on the development of both Morris and an important strain of Australian cultural studies, this discussion moves between a specific focus on Morris’ biographical details and a broader contextual analysis. Thus my account makes a series of claims regarding the distinctive nature of Australian cultural studies practices through reference to the particular intellectual concerns of one of its better known practitioners.

Meaghan Morris was born in the small country town of Tenterfield in 1950 but was raised in Maitland, an economically depressed town on the outskirts of the industrial city of Newcastle in New South Wales. Living in a small town that was once a service centre for the rural community and the coalfields but has more recently become a suburbanised part of outer Newcastle, Morris grew up in an atmosphere dominated by class issues and communist party politics (Morris’ father was a member of the Communist Party of Australia (CPA) as was Morris herself from 1969-1972). In 1969, however, Morris made a major break with her rural/suburban, lower middle-class origins enrolling in a BA in French and English at Australia’s most prestigious “sandstone” university, the University of Sydney. The traditional nature of the courses she attended early on in her life as a university student left Morris dissatisfied and found her searching for alternative sources of inspiration from the

WEA courses on film taught by John Flaus (Morris attended his Newport based summer school classes in 1969 and 1970).\textsuperscript{471}

Flaus, who came out of a Sydney tradition of “self-taught” intellectuals and was associated with Sydney’s libertarian “movement,”\textsuperscript{472} had a significant impact on Morris. Indeed, in the introduction to their reader on Australian cultural studies, Frow and Morris argue that Flaus “helped to create a constituency for the project of cultural studies as well as to train a generation of film and media critics.”\textsuperscript{473} What Flaus introduced Morris to was a distinctly Sydney-based culture of critical thinking that existed largely outside of the academy; a culture which played a formative role in the early development of a distinctly Australian strain of cultural theory. Frow and Morris’ description, then, of the “bohemian” intellectual milieu out of which Flaus emerged as a “socially mixed but intensely familial urban subculture [alongside] small journal networks…both of which were historically deep-rooted in the inner-city life of Sydney and Melbourne”\textsuperscript{474} also captures the mood of the largely Sydney-based intellectual culture from which Morris first emerged as a young feminist, film critic and radical cultural critic.

These early experiences of class and geographic mobility have, not surprisingly, impacted significantly on Morris’ intellectual development. Thus, while her work often suggests a deep antipathy towards Marxist theory and its totalising impulses (as reflected in her criticisms of the reductionist and universalist tendencies of Marxist theorists like David

\textsuperscript{471} Flaus, a well known Australian actor and film critic, continues to teach WEA courses on film but is now based in Melbourne.

\textsuperscript{472} Sydney has a long history of libertarianism in various forms; however, it is the group of intellectuals in the 1950s and 60s associated with the “Sydney Push” that I would argue impacted significantly on Morris’ intellectual development. Emerging out of the iconoclastic teachings of John Anderson (professor of philosophy at the University of Sydney) and his Freethought society in the 1940s, these bohemian intellectuals existed (rather self-consciously) on the margins of society and promulgated a doctrine based around anarchism, sexual freedom and anti-careerism. By the time Morris was on the Sydney scene, the reign of the Push was coming to an end, its anti-establishment philosophy being succeeded by the concerns of the various social movements of the sixties and seventies. Nevertheless, Morris’ own intellectual stance (and that of other intellectuals of her generation such as Paul Foss) owes a considerable debt to the legacy of this libertarian movement. Furthermore, through her CPA connections Morris had direct contact with the Push in its dying days via André Frankovits, a Push regular who Morris subsequently married. For a further discussion of Sydney libertarianism see McKenzie Wark, \textit{The Virtual Republic: Australia’s Culture Wars of the 1990s} (St Leonards, NSW: Allen and Unwin, 1997) 60-83; and Anne Coombs, \textit{Sex and Anarchy: The Life and Death of the Sydney Push} (Australia: Penguin Books, 1996).

\textsuperscript{473} Frow and Morris xxvi.

\textsuperscript{474} Frow and Morris xxvi.
Harvey), Morris’ writing has nevertheless been marked by an enduring concern with the intersections between the economic and the cultural, as evidenced by publications such as *Ecstacy and Economics* (1992) her groundbreaking analysis of the charismatic Australian labour leader Paul Keating. Furthermore, Morris’ social and geographic origins have resulted in a body of work that has been particularly attuned to the plight of those members of society, such as women and the working classes, on the margins of modernity. As Morris explained in the introductory section of her article “Metamorphoses at Sydney Tower,” while her research on suburban malls and the Henry Parkes motel was part of a larger project concerned with development and change and, in particular, with producing “comparative research into the histories of specific cases in different regions, and different socio-economic contexts,” the spaces Morris has tended to privilege in her work are sites of “women’s work,” sites that are also “invested in some way by white-working class communities.”

Morris’ discussion in “Metamorphoses at Sydney Tower” of the marginalised nature of “everyday” culture within traditional narratives of modernity can, at the same time, be read as a powerful commentary on the role and location of intellectuals in relation to the everyday, a theme which for Morris, as a woman operating in the seventies in the masculinist, metropolitan culture of Sydney’s intellectual “bohemia,” has played a central role in her writing. Another (related) theme that figures prominently in the Sydney tower piece is the question of the relationship between Australian intellectuals such as herself and European modernity and its “towering” critical intellectual traditions—that is, of Morris’ relationship to a specifically French genealogy of theories of the everyday represented by figures like Michel de Certeau, Henri Lefebvre and Roland Barthes. While, for Morris, John Flaus represented an exemplary local role model of an “amateur,” libertarian-inflected approach to intellectual practice, from the seventies onwards her intellectual development and that of Australian cultural studies in general was powerfully shaped by various imported intellectual

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476 As Morris argues in her introduction to the book, “aesthetic critics should engage more seriously with the cultural forms in which economic understandings of society have been disseminated for the past ten years.” *Ecstacy and Economics: American Essays for John Forbes* (Sydney: Empress Publications, 1992) 8.
influences, in particular, French theory. As I noted in my earlier account of the development of American cultural studies, French theory was largely absorbed into English departments and transformed into a fairly depoliticised form of literary deconstruction in the US, while in the UK it was imported via the New Left and in particular New Left Review. Both these processes occurred to a certain extent in Australia; however, what marked out the reception of French theory as unique was the role played by Australian feminism and by the small press and journal culture that emerged out of the New Left, feminist, sexual and libertarian politics that dominated Australian leftist intellectual culture in the late sixties and throughout the seventies. Morris and to a large extent Australian cultural studies, then, was formed by a combination of imported French theoretical and American feminist ideas, and “local” political and intellectual traditions and concerns. Before going on to discuss in more detail the political and intellectual setting in which young intellectuals like Morris found themselves operating at the time, I want to focus in this next section on the specific role that Morris played in generating a transnational (albeit largely French-Australian) intellectual exchange.

ii. Morris and the Turn to Theory

Given the lack of theoretically oriented courses offered at Sydney University in the early seventies (where Morris recalls an education that was defined by the European and American “universalities” of Leavisism and New Criticism), Morris’ first encounters with theory were rather ad hoc and occurred largely in extra-academic settings; although it is important to note that when she returned in 1974 to university to complete an honours degree in French studies she was strongly influenced by the structuralist teachings of two academics, Anne Freadman (with whom she later wrote two articles on semiotics) and Ross Chambers. Prior to that, however, her main encounters with French thought were through reading groups. For instance, Morris read Althusser in the context of a reading group attached to the Communist Party Tendency while she encountered Foucault via the anti-psychiatry and

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480 In his discussion of Sydney intellectual culture, for example, McKenzie Wark describes Morris as “a figure, at the crossroads between Paris and The Push,” 96.
483 Tavistock who published R.D. Laing at the time also published Foucault.
gay liberation movements. Furthermore, it was through the anti-psychiatry movement that Morris met Paul Foss (the long term editor of Art and Text who was at the time studying History and Philosophy of Science at the University of NSW), and they subsequently banded together to translate and publish the work of various French theorists.

At that time, like many people involved in New Left and new social movement politics, Morris’ intellectual interests and writings were inflected by the social issues of the day. Her various connections with feminism, communism, gay liberation, etc. were marked by her involvement in small journals like Mejane and the Tribune as well as GLP (started in 1973 as the Gay Liberation Press). In 1976, GLP turned into the journal Working Papers in Sex, Science and Culture which subsequently became Working Papers (WP). The WP collective in turn produced monographs under the general name of Feral Publications, an alternative press that, despite its small print runs and minimal budget, played a significant role in disseminating French theory throughout Australia.\footnote{Contrary to the notion that Australia only ever imported theory Morris has been approached on a number of occasions by Americans who claim that their first encounters with French theory were through Feral monographs that they had obtained through various means.}

The first two issues of WP dealt primarily with psychoanalysis and Marxism, focusing in particular on the work of Lacan, Althusser and Juliet Mitchell. As Morris has subsequently noted, the collective was contributing at that time to a wider set of debates between Althusserians in Sydney who were centred around the Philosophy Department at the University of Sydney and those more politically grounded Althusserians in Melbourne associated with Intervention, as well as lesbian/feminist groups who were interested in the political utility of psychoanalysis and in particular Juliet Mitchell’s book Psychoanalysis and Feminism.\footnote{Stephen Muecke, “Relations of Theory: Meaghan Morris talks with Stephen Muecke,” Contemporary Essays on Literary Periodicals, ed. David Carter (Sydney: Local Consumption Publications, 1991) 61.}

Morris has suggested that members of the WP group were largely unaware of or at least not particularly interested in English interpretations of French theory (as represented by New Left Review).\footnote{In fact, Morris argues that the New Left Review tradition was much more “cosmopolitan” than Working Papers’ approach to “theory” in the sense that the NLR published material from South America, East Germany...}
antipathy to what she sees as the narrow and rather idiosyncratic nature of English interpretations of French theory as well as her concern that Australian cultural studies is still caught up in a colonial relationship with Britain and too often turns to British models for guidance. Challenging British-oriented accounts of the development of Australian cultural studies, Morris argues that, in terms of the Anglophone theoretical traditions that impacted on Australian cultural theory in the seventies, she (and the WP group) looked much more to America, particularly American feminist theory, than to Britain for inspiration. 487

Notably, it was Juliet Mitchell’s book that Morris took to Paris where she was based at the University of Paris 8, Vincennes from 1976-1978 on a French government scholarship (completing a dissertation on the salonnière Madame de Tencin). During her time there she attended lectures by figures like Deleuze, Lacan, Foucault and Barthes. She also, somewhat paradoxically given that Vincennes was a major centre for psychoanalytic theory (Lacan held a chair there), gave seminars on Mitchell’s book to a French audience who had had little previous contact with non-French applications of psychoanalysis. 488

Australians like Morris, then, participated in and contributed to an intense process of international, intellectual exchange in the seventies. While British journals and publishing houses obviously played a major institutional role as clearing houses for French theory, pivotal individuals like Morris, Foss and Paul Patton (who Morris met for the first time in Paris) also played an important role in directly importing theory to Australia (as well as subsequently exporting their own Australian version of cultural theory to the US). Morris’ time in France contributed to a heightened awareness of the specific conditions out of which French structuralism had emerged. For instance, according to Morris, those Australian intellectuals whose received notions of Althusserianism came via the English New Left saw Althusser as coming out of a primarily Marxist rather than a structuralist tradition. Accordingly, many Australians at the time were unaware of structuralism’s developmental history and the genealogical relations between earlier figures such as Levi-Strauss and later (post)structuralist theorists like Foucault. 489 Student intellectuals like Morris and Foss (as well as Paul Patton) thus contributed to Sydney intellectual culture (and subsequently to

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and Eastern Europe whereas the WP group were almost exclusively French-focused. Meaghan Morris. Personal interview. 3 Oct. 1997.

487 Morris. Personal interview.

488 Muecke, “Relations of Theory,” 62.
Australian cultural studies) a mode of theorising that was steeped in a French intellectual tradition and that offered an alternative to the somewhat empirically driven concerns of English, Marxist-inflected translations of continental theory.

When Morris returned from Paris, she was involved in working on two WP books that were put out by Feral Publications. *Language, Sexuality and Subversion*, co-edited with Foss in 1978, contained translations by Foss and Morris\(^{490}\) of work by Baudrillard and Deleuze and Guattari, and included Irigaray’s “That Sex Which Is Not One.” The WP group had a loose connection with the Department of General Philosophy at Sydney University at that stage and Elizabeth Grosz\(^{491}\) and Mia Campioni, who were based in the department at the time, each contributed an article on psychoanalysis to the collection. The second collection of essays, which was co-edited with Patton (now a professor in the Department of General Philosophy), was *Michael Foucault: Power, Truth, Strategy* (1979). While Telos and Tavistock had published Foucault’s major work from the 1960s, including *Madness and Civilization, The Birth of the Clinic, The Order of Things* and *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Patton and Morris’ translation nevertheless made a significant contribution to the importation of French theory to Australia by introducing audiences to some of Foucault’s later essays on power.

Ironically, as Morris noted some time later, while the six year long GLP/Working Papers project of translating French and Italian texts for a local audience had become “an important element of what remained, on principle, an ill-defined project of fostering ‘radical theoretical writing’ in Australia,” \(^{492}\) it was when the project started to become successful locally that the group began to fall apart. Having no formal institutional base or access to grants, the collective had to look for overseas support in order to increase its print run locally but the pressure on the student-run collective to set up a network for overseas distribution on top of the labour of translation proved too much and the collective subsequently disbanded. Thus, while these early efforts in forming a distinctly Australian strain of cultural theory were formative, it was not until the work of figures like Morris gained some institutional

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489 Muecke, “Relations of Theory,” 60.
490 The Working Papers collective at that time included Elizabeth Grosz, George Alexander, Terence Bell and Graeme Tubbenhauer. Those also involved in the translation process included Caroline Jones and Randall Albury while Gino Moliterno translated the Eco piece.
491 For Morris, Grosz, who went on to become a leading feminist thinker within Australian and international circles, was a major figure in the first wave of professionalised theorists.
recognition via the academy and the international publishing industry that Australian cultural studies began to emerge as a recognised body of knowledge.

iii. The New Left, French Theory, Feminism, and the Role of Small Presses and Journals

The avant-garde culture in which Morris was operating in the seventies owed a large debt to the rise of the new social movements, and in particular the New Left and feminism. Both of these political formations contributed to the emergence of the radical publishing culture of the sixties and seventies thereby enabling the production and dissemination of the distinctly Australian translations and interpretations of French theory undertaken by figures like Morris. In broad terms, however, what set the stage for this critically productive period, and provided the driving force behind the New Left and new social movements politics, was the expansion and democratisation of the Australian tertiary education system. In particular, the expansion of the university system in the 1960s and early 1970s, in the context of full-employment and the abolition of fees under the Whitlam government (1972-1975), provided the material conditions for a whole generation of tertiary students to radicalise and “drop out.” The politics of the student movement smoothly intersected with the influential intellectual culture associated with journals like *Arena* (launched in 1963), a revisionist Marxist publication whose central thesis was that the intelligentsia represented the primary social stratum that would drive social change. The emergence of a generation of young student radicals like Morris thus provided the conditions for the formation of a complex network of innovative printing presses, journals, as well as more *ad hoc* sites of intellectual (re)production such as reading groups. However, while forms of intellectual and student radicalism were roughly centred around university campuses, unlike its British counterpart the Australian New Left was relatively disorganised and non-sectarian.⁴⁹³

Reflecting the rather anarchic nature of New Left and new social movement politics, Australian intellectual culture at the time drew on an eclectic mix of influences. As Andrew Milner argues, the emergent New Left and its student base were at this formative time

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⁴⁹³ Although Docker argues that the anarchistic feel of the New Left diminished in the seventies as various political groups became more structured. John Docker, “‘Those Halycon Days’: The Moment of the New Left,” *Intellectual Movements and Australian Society*, eds. Brian Head and James Walter (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1988) 298.
“variously influenced by *Arena* itself, by libertarianism, Maoism, Trotskyism, and by the various Western Marxist thinkers successively translated into English by the British *New Left Review.*”\(^{494}\) In contrast to Morris’ argument regarding the minimal influence of the *New Left Review,* both Andrew Milner and Peter Beilharz contend that the journal played a crucial role in the process of trans-national intellectual exchange that moulded local Australian intellectual formations in the seventies, with Beilharz arguing that, overall, Australian intellectual culture was more influenced by British than American theoretical trends.\(^{495}\) As he puts it “[t]here seemed at least for the decade of the 1970s to be a direct pony-express line which connected Paris into the *New Left Review* and the *New Left Review* into Melbourne and Sydney.”\(^{496}\) However, while the *New Left Review* offered Australian intellectuals a peculiarly English interpretation of structuralism (as evidenced by Morris’ comments concerning the narrow conception of structuralism held by many Australian intellectuals in the seventies), Beilharz argues that “one factor which set Australia apart from Britain and America, however, was the culture of local communism.”\(^{497}\) Thus, while the CPA was in decline in France, in Australia, where Stalinism had been tempered by its engagement with libertarianism, the old culture of the CPA was radically revamped and revitalised in the sixties by “an influx of youth into the CPA, a shift which prefigured its later death, for the strength of communist culture hitherto was that of a generation of Depression communists.”\(^{498}\)

This then was the political milieu in which figures like Morris began their intellectual careers, a milieu that was not only distinctive from that of the British and French left, but that according to Beilharz actually “anticipated later European developments.”\(^{499}\) Thus, not only was the Australian political climate “effectively Eurocommunist before Eurocommunism” but Beilharz also argues that Australian intellectuals anticipated the shift to structural Marxism. For instance, the Melbourne-based scholar Alastair Davidson published one of the first books on Gramsci in 1968 while the journal *Intervention,* launched in 1971, helped introduce and disseminate Althusserianism to Australian radicals.\(^{500}\) Beilharz’s argument here is supported by Rita Felski and Zoe Sofia who contend in their discussion of the

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\(^{494}\) Milner, “Literature, Culture and Society,” 47.
\(^{496}\) Beilharz 127.
\(^{497}\) Beilharz 127.
\(^{498}\) Beilharz 127.
\(^{499}\) Beilharz 127.
\(^{500}\) Beilharz 127.
influential role played by French theory on the development of cultural studies in Australia that, rather than being translated and subsequently exported to Australia via Britain, sections of the Australian intellectual community were reading French philosophers such as Baudrillard, Deleuze and Guattari, Irigaray, Foucault and Lyotard before French theory became widely disseminated in Britain and the US. Arguing that this situation came about through the burgeoning “small press” culture of the seventies, they highlight, in particular, the role of figures like Morris who, as they note, “first became known as a proponent of French theory and a translator of Foucault.”

An intellectual and social movement that, as Felski and Sofia have argued, has travelled a similar genealogical pathway to Australian cultural studies and that also played a central role in the turn to French theory, is Australian feminism. Indeed, Morris’ own intellectual formation owes a great debt to feminism and in particular to its foregrounding of “the politics of the everyday and of ‘personal’ life.” As Tony Bennett has argued, unlike British cultural studies where (at least in its early days) class issues displaced those of gender, feminism has from the outset had a formative and lasting influence on Australian cultural studies. Indeed, in their discussion of possible genealogies for Australian cultural studies other than those centred around Britain, Frow and Morris go so far as to suggest that the input provided by feminism has been “[p]erhaps more fundamental and lasting than any other single intellectual influence.” In many ways, however, feminism’s influence on the development of cultural studies cannot be separated from that of the New Left, a movement with which Australian feminism shared a number of intellectual and political concerns. Thus, for example, when second wave feminism emerged as a political and social movement in the seventies it was known as the Women’s Liberation Movement (WLM), a title that reflected its origins in the radical emancipatory politics of the New Left and its grounding in the student movement of the 1960s. However, while the WLM shared some political grounding with the New Left, at the same time feminism was highly critical of its

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500 Beilharz 127.
501 Felski and Sofia 385.
502 Felski and Sofia 385.
503 Frow and Morris xxvii.
505 Frow and Morris xxvii.
fundamentally masculinist culture. Organisationally, then, the WLM drew upon an anarchist politics rather than the socialist traditions out of which the New Left emerged. Ideologically, however, the strong links between the New Left and the fledgling WLM meant that early feminist theory was dominated by Marxist/socialist approaches with books like Juliet Mitchell’s *Woman’s Estate* (1970), based on an article that appeared in *New Left Review* in 1966, being particularly influential.

Early feminism, however, was also influenced by a number of other approaches and drew its political and theoretical inspiration from both local and international sources. For example, the feminist labour historian Ann Curthoys describing her involvement in an early WLM group in Glebe (Sydney), comments that in 1970 the group read a lot of American WLM material while other influential texts at the time included Germaine Greer’s *The Female Eunuch* (1971), Shulamith Firestone’s *The Dialectic of Sex* (1970) and Kate Millett’s *Sexual Politics* (1970). However, while Australian feminism was strongly influenced by international theoretical and political developments, the early seventies was also an especially productive time for local feminist scholarship and saw the emergence of journals such as *Mejane* (1971), *Refractory Girl* (1972/73) and *Hecate* (1975), through which young feminists such as Morris first developed their editorial and writing skills. The intellectual culture and networks of Sydney proved to be especially fertile ground for nurturing an emergent Australian feminist theoretical avant-garde, a key moment being the splitting in two of the Sydney philosophy department in 1973. This split was engineered by feminist teachers and students, including figures like Elizabeth Grosz and Moira Gatens, and apart from representing a break away from the traditional philosophical concerns of the previous department, the formation of a new “General Philosophy” department represented a broader movement within feminism towards questions of subjectivity and the body, and of course French philosophy.

At the same time as this Sydney-based brand of feminism turned towards French theory, the emergence of what Felski and Sofia argue was a distinctly “Australian ‘school’ of corporeal feminism” well and truly problematised the notion that Australian intellectual culture was

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508 Felski and Sofia 386.
509 Felski and Sofia 386.
purely an “import” culture. This “New Australian Feminism,” a term coined by Michèle Barrett to describe the peculiar mixture of “feminist rhetoric, Lacanian psychoanalysis and Barthesian semiotics” that distinguished poststructuralist feminist work in Australia in the late eighties, made (and continues to make) a significant impact on the international intellectual community.\textsuperscript{510} Furthermore, as Milner argues, Australian feminism, particularly via the Verso “Questions for Feminism” series which was co-edited by Barrett, played an important role in introducing French feminist theory to the English speaking intellectual community, with figures like Elizabeth Grosz (who recently moved from Melbourne’s Monash University to take up an academic post at SUNY Buffalo) making a pivotal contribution to the installation of French feminist and poststructuralist thought within the Anglo-American academy.\textsuperscript{511} While, as Milner points out, Morris is a somewhat atypical member of this Australian-French, post-structuralist movement (in the sense that her intellectual concerns are more popularly directed, “more sentimentally attached to the idea of ‘the Left’,” and cross an eclectic range of fields\textsuperscript{512}) I would argue that, like Australian cultural studies, Morris has been strongly influenced by this local-transnational formation. Likewise, she has herself played an important role in the emergence of the “New Australian Feminism,” her translations of and critical essays on French theory contributing to the placement of post-structuralist feminism into the American and Australian academy. In particular, her book \textit{The Pirates Fiancée} (1988), a collection of essays published by Verso, saw a diverse range of work Morris had published largely within small journals and presses in Sydney presented to an international (read US) academic audience under the banner of postmodernism and feminism.

The international recognition that Australian feminism received in the eighties was paralleled by the growing influence of French theory within the Australian academy. As Milner notes, the “The Foreign Bodies Conference: Semiotics in/ and Australia” held in Sydney in 1981 (at which Morris presented a paper) marked the beginning of the institutionalisation of French theory within the Australian academy.\textsuperscript{513} The first semiotics conference to be held in Australia, “Foreign Bodies” saw semiotics and post-structuralism subsequently installed in

\textsuperscript{510} Milner, “Literature, Culture and Society,” 61.
\textsuperscript{511} Milner, “Literature, Culture and Society,” 61-2.
\textsuperscript{512} Milner, “Literature, Culture and Society,” 62.
\textsuperscript{513} Milner, “Literature, Culture and Society,” 53. Note that some of the papers from the conference (including those by Meaghan Morris and Anne Freadman, and Paul Foss) were published in Peter Botsman, Chris Burns and Peter Hutchings, eds. \textit{The Foreign Bodies Papers} (Sydney: Local Consumption Publications, 1981).
various university departments and courses, via figures such as M.A.K. Halliday at Sydney, John Frow at Murdoch University in Western Australia, John Fiske at the Western Australian Institute of Technology\textsuperscript{514} and Ian Reid at Deakin University near Melbourne. Journals like *Southern Review*,\textsuperscript{515} *Art and Text*, the *Australian Journal of Communication* and the *Australian Journal of Screen Theory*\textsuperscript{516} all subsequently contributed to a growing acceptance of post-structuralism across the disciplines. However, it was not until 1983 when Fiske (along with other Western Australian-based academics such as Turner and Frow) launched the *Australian Journal of Cultural Studies (AJCS)* that cultural theory, in the self-conscious guise of cultural studies, gained a central forum in Australia.\textsuperscript{517} While the journal was short lived (it was taken over by Methuen in 1987 and transformed into the international journal *Cultural Studies*),\textsuperscript{518} it made a central contribution to the publication of Australian oriented cultural theoretical work and played an important role in giving Australian cultural studies an international profile.

iv. On the Edges of the Academy

The 1980s saw the gradual academic legitimation of a radical theoretical movement that had drawn its initial inspiration from the vibrant and largely student-driven intellectual culture of the sixties and seventies. While figures like Grosz achieved academic success (and a certain

\textsuperscript{514} Goodall argues that Fiske, who moved from the University of Wales to Western Australia and later shifted to the US, had a strong influence on the development of Australian cultural studies in the 1980s, a period that Goodall contends was dominated by Fiske’s conception of “popular culture as counter-aesthetic.” At the same time, Goodall notes that the Fiskean school came under considerable attack from other Australian based cultural critics like Morris, Turner and Adrian Martin who argued against Fiske’s apparent uncritical reification of the popular. Goodall 75-76.

\textsuperscript{515} For a discussion of the impact of the Adelaide University-based journal *Southern Review*, the *Australian Journal of Cultural Studies* and the Griffith University-based journal *Culture and Policy* on the development of Australian cultural studies see Craik.

\textsuperscript{516} The Western Australian-based *Australian Journal of Screen Theory* later became the Australian journal of media and culture *Continuum* which is, as I mentioned before, now the “official” journal of the Cultural Studies Association of Australia.

\textsuperscript{517} An article that is often referred to and that is featured in that first issue, Fiske’s playfully titled “Surfalism and Sandiotics: The Beach in Oz Popular Culture” (*Australian Journal of Cultural Studies* 1.2 (1983): 120-149), indicates the debt that the Fiskean brand of cultural studies owed to semiotics at that stage and to Barthes in particular. The piece exemplifies the strange kinds of hybridised theoretical forms that the export of theory can produce, drawing as it does on a somewhat uncomfortable mixture of structuralism (as per early Barthes) and later poststructuralist Barthesian concepts such as jouissance.

\textsuperscript{518} It should be noted that when the *Australian Journal of Cultural Studies (AJCS)* was taken over by Methuen the editorial team at the time negotiated for one issue a year of *Cultural Studies* to be edited in Australia. However the (unforeseen) take over of Methuen by Routledge resulted in the weakening of ties to Australia (although the journal retains some links and continues to occasionally publish Australian-oriented issues). See Graeme Turner, “Dilemmas of a Cultural Critic: Australian Cultural Studies Today,” *Australian Journal of Communications* 16 (1989): 1-12 for a discussion of the history of the *AJCS*. 
degree of celebrity) during this period, for Morris and other non-academics the shift into the academy has not been without its problems. As an intellectual influenced by the anti-institutional, anti-careerist ethos of the Sydney libertarians, and whose early experiences of the academy were of intellectual conservatism and disciplinary rigidity (for example, Morris was not permitted to undertake an interdisciplinary thesis between the English and French departments), Morris has had a rather ambivalent relationship to professional models of intellectualism, especially those associated with the academy.

Nevertheless, for much of her intellectual life Morris has found herself in some kind of relationship (albeit often a marginal one) with the academy. Thus while Morris’ early intellectual career was formed around the extra-academic culture of small journals, “independent” presses, and reading groups, it is important to acknowledge the contribution that the university system made in creating the hothouse intellectual environment in which Australian cultural studies’ earliest practitioners were formed. As I have discussed, the New Left and the new social movements were dependent on a largely bourgeois (or, as in the case of figures like Morris, petit-bourgeois), student constituency while the small press culture that enlivened and contributed to the Sydney/Melbourne intellectual scene in the seventies was largely maintained by radical university students reaping the benefits of a free education system at a time of economic prosperity. Thus, while Morris’ career has certainly not taken a traditional academic path, she and other cultural critics based outside the university system have had a symbiotic relationship with the university system and the culture of academia, a culture which they have both drawn upon and contributed to over the years. Moreover, Morris has had to fund her intellectual career by working within various cultural institutions, and these material conditions have in turn impacted on Morris’ writing and intellectual practices. In this sense what I want to suggest here about Morris and, in turn, Australian cultural studies is that its developmental history has often been marked not so much by its extra-institutional status as by its mobility between institutions.

Thus, from the mid-1970s to the early 1980s, Morris supported herself financially by tutoring and lecturing part time in French, art theory, cinema studies and communications at a variety of educational institutions including the WEA in Sydney, the University of Sydney and the New South Wales Institute of Technology (which subsequently became the University of Technology, Sydney, where Morris was up until recently based as a senior ARC fellow).
During this time Morris was also working as a film critic for *The Sydney Morning Herald* from 1979 to 1981 and *The Australian Financial Review* from 1981 to 1985. Reflecting upon that period in the introduction to *The Pirate’s Fiancée*, Morris comments that given the arduous nature of film reviewing as well as her teaching responsibilities “the activity of thinking and writing about theories that might inform my practice had to be cherished as a hobby.”

Morris’ theory-as-hobby approach, however, proved to be a highly productive one; during this period she published on a wide variety of topics including Australian cinema, film criticism, and French and American feminism in mainly local journals and magazines like *Art and Text, Intervention, Island Magazine, Southern Review* and *Hecate*.

Following this busy period, Morris’ intellectual reputation started to consolidate locally and, at the same time, her work gained increasing international attention. While Australian cultural studies also started to develop an international name around this time (due in part to John Fiske and the *AJCS*), ironically it was probably Morris’ association with French theory and Australian feminism—rather than her status within Australian cultural studies—that first saw her being wooed by the American academic community. In 1987, for example, she was invited by the prominent, feminist, media theorist Patricia Mellencamp to spend a semester at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee as a Visiting Associate Professor based at the Centre for Twentieth Century Studies. However, it was not until the publication of *The Pirate’s Fiancée* in 1988 that Morris began to be seen in the US as a major cultural critic. It was around this time that essays such as “Banality in Cultural Studies” and “At Henry Parkes Motel,” both of which have since attained a canonical status within cultural studies circles, began to appear in international journals like *Discourse* and *Cultural Studies*.

At that stage very few Australian-based cultural studies theorists (apart from perhaps Fiske) were well known in the US, and Australian theoretical work was often seen as too local in its focus to be of interest to an international audience. I would suggest, however, that Morris’ ability to shift between and negotiate different institutional, disciplinary, theoretical and cultural “sites” made her work highly marketable within the international intellectual community. Morris subsequently became something of a standard bearer for Australian cultural studies, a situation that was somewhat ironic given her relatively marginal status in

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relation to some of the more institutionalised forms of Australian cultural studies at that time. 521

Accordingly, in the late eighties and early nineties Morris spent much of her time on visiting scholar programmes to the US (including a visiting professorship to the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana where Lawrence Grossberg was based at the time, and a senior fellowship at Cornell University in 1993). In the US, Morris benefited from an American academic system with a much more developed structure of arts funding and private patronage than in Australia, conducting much of her writing and research in the late eighties on the proceeds of lectures and fellowships. Somewhat ironically, it was during this period that Morris wrote some of her now classic articles on specifically Australian sites and events; “Metamorphoses at Sydney Tower,”522 for example, was written while she was based at the Unit for Criticism and Interpretive Theory at The University of Illinois.

On returning to Australia in the early nineties, Morris found it increasingly difficult to exist on the margins of the academy in the way in which she had during the seventies and early eighties. While she managed to pick up funding from sources such as The Literature Board of the Australia Council, the exhausting nature of conducting “independent” intellectual work forced Morris to accept what was effectively her first full-time academic position, a five year contract as an Australian Senior Research Fellow at the University of Technology, Sydney (where Morris also recently completed a doctorate on the history of Australian popular culture). More recently, following the completion of that contract, Morris has returned to the US to teach and will subsequently take up an academic position in Hong Kong in 2000.

Despite Morris’ concerns about locating herself within the academy, the benefits of institutional affiliation, however, quickly manifested themselves in the form of a new Australian cultural studies journal co-edited by Morris and another important Sydney-based cultural studies figure, Stephen Muecke. Since its launch in 1995, *The UTS Review* like the *AJCS* has sought to provide a locally-based international forum for the publication of Australian and regionalist material. *The UTS Review* is a refereed journal which encourages

521 For instance, Morris was not published in the *AJCS* during its brief reign from 1983 to 1987 although ironically she is now a reasonably regular contributor to its international successor *Cultural Studies*. 522 The fact that the piece was subsequently published in the Routledge-owned UK journal *New Formations* is testament to the (inter)national mobility of Morris’ work.
both experimental forms of “New Writing” and theoretical work for more academic audiences; its editors argue that “[b]y providing full professional credit for the work we publish, we hope to overcome one of the major disincentives that scholars and writers now face.” In its attempt to encourage experimental work at the same time as acknowledging the realities of an increasingly professionalised academic sphere, the journal in many ways offers an allegory of Morris’ own dual positioning between, and negotiation of, cutting edge intellectualism and the academic mainstream. Furthermore, it captures the kind of paradoxical relations between the more institutionalised aspects of cultural studies and its anti-disciplinary, theoretically radical heritage in Australia.

v. Australian Cultural Studies and Trans-institutional Mobility

For Morris, her relative freedom from the professional duties of academic life (such as teaching and administration) has not only given her a degree of mobility across disciplines and between cultures (apart from her frequent trips to America and her ongoing research on Australian culture, Morris has more recently become interested in “Asian” cultural studies and has, as I note above, accepted an academic appointment in Hong Kong), but it has also allowed her to move with relative ease between institutional sites—in particular, between academic, policy and media spheres. For example, Morris has been a member and chair of the Human Rights Council of Australia as well as an adviser on a variety of policy issues from film and tourism to multiculturalism and education. At the same time, Morris has been involved over the years in a variety of public forums where she has debated pressing political issues of the day such as media diversity, multiculturalism and censorship, and has contributed to a number of cultural debates at film and arts festivals. Central to Morris’ sense of the broader responsibility of the intellectual is her active participation in the popular media: in particular, she has appeared as a regular radio presenter (on ABC Radio National shows such as “Books and Ideas” and “Books and Writing”); contributed to discussion rounds; and given talks on a wide variety of topics including political correctness, feminism, the role of intellectuals, and national cultural policy. In her most recent guise as a university-based research fellow, Morris continues to invest her time in policy and media issues by using her institutional base to support an essentially flexible or mobile mode of intellectual practice.
As I have already suggested, however, Morris’ concerns with intellectual mobility are not tied to a romantic discourse of artistic freedom so much as they are driven by a pragmatic politics that, I would argue, emerges out of a number of specifically Australian movements and sets of concerns such as those associated with Sydney libertarianism, the Australian left and Australian feminism. As Frow and Morris note in relation to the distinctive nature of cultural studies practices in Australia, Australian intellectuals for the most part have found themselves operating “in a small society with relatively limited institutional resources and with flexible traditions...allowing a good deal of mobility between institutions.” In this last section of my “biography” of Morris and Australian cultural studies, I want to look more closely at this issue of institutional mobility, an issue that I would suggest is linked to Australian cultural studies’ openness to trans-national influences and, in particular, is manifested in the cosmopolitanism of both Morris and her writings.

While most Australian cultural studies practitioners are located within the academy, like Morris, these practitioners are also situated within a broader “tradition of circulating intellectuals between academic, media and bureaucratic work, between critical and policy functions.” For example, figures like McKenzie Wark and Catherine Lumby, both of whom are well known cultural studies academics and respected journalists illustrate the intersecting nature of the academic and media spheres in Australia. Wark teaches media studies at Macquarie University in Sydney and writes a regular column for The Australian while Catharine Lumby is the Director of the School of Media and Communication at the University of Sydney, writes an opinion column for the Sydney Morning Herald, and has published best selling popular/academic cross-over texts like Bad Girls and Gotcha. Morris, who as I have mentioned was herself a film critic for a number of years, has a particular affiliation with the figure of the “journalist-critic,” a figure which exemplifies the “culture of autodidactic and amateur practice” that has helped shape Australian intellectual life.

523 Frow and Morris xxv.
525 Catharine Lumby, Bad Girls: The Media, Sex and Feminism in the '90s (St Leonards, NSW: Allen and Unwin, 1997); Catharine Lumby, Gotcha: Life in a Tabloid World (St Leonards, NSW: Allen and Unwin, 1999).
526 Frow and Morris xxvi.
527 Frow and Morris xxv.
The other trans-institutional figure that has played an important role in distinguishing Australian cultural studies from other English-speaking cultural studies formations is the policy-oriented intellectual. While Morris has at times been critical of this mode of intellectual practice, nevertheless I would suggest that the figure of the policy intellectual has played a formative role in the development of both Morris and Australian cultural studies. In particular, the prominent role that cultural policy practitioners like Stuart Cunningham, Elizabeth Jacka and Jennifer Craik—figures who have operated across a variety of institutional sites from the film and tourist industry, federal and state policy bodies to the academy—have played within the Australian cultural studies scene reflects the distinctly intertwined nature of the relations between the university system and other cultural, governmental and institutional spheres in Australia. Before going on to discuss some of the specific models of intellectualism offered up by Morris in her writings, then, I want to briefly talk about the emergence of the figure of the policy-oriented intellectual in Australia.

While it is not always acknowledged, Frow and Morris argue that cultural policy has a precedent for its distinctively mobile intellectual practices in the developmental history of Australian feminism and, in particular, in the figure of the feminist bureaucrat or femocrat. Since the early seventies when the Labour government, pressured by the Women’s Electoral Lobby, appointed a women’s adviser to the prime minister in 1973—an appointment that was followed by the recruitment of a number of other feminists (mostly from the tertiary education sector) to the public service—Australian feminists have had a close relationship with the state. What is interesting about this relationship, however, is that it has been marked by the emergence of a burgeoning literature dealing with the problems of theorising women’s relation to the state. That is, a number of feminist academics have sought to utilise the academic theories they were teaching their students to shed light on specific policy concerns. While early feminist theories of the state relied on traditional Marxist accounts, later critical feminist work in this area drew on poststructuralism with academic theorists like Rosemary Pringle and Sophie Watson drawing upon a Foucauldian model of power in order to rethink the state “as a set of arenas” rather than a monolithic institution. Furthermore, scholars like Anna Yeatman sought to bring together the seemingly incompatible discourses

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528 Frow and Morris xxvii.
of policy and postmodernism. While, as Beilharz notes, the emergence of the femocracy movement in Australia was not a completely surprising development given “the practical nature of Australian social theorising” what was unusual about this movement was the way in which Australian feminism managed to apply French theory to the realm of state policy. In this sense the femocrat movement needs to be acknowledged as paving the way for the field of cultural policy studies, and in particular for its rather unique use of French theory (in particular Foucault’s writings on governmentality).

As Tony Bennett (one of the cultural policy movement’s leading proponents) has argued, cultural policy studies “is now a widely accepted component of the cultural studies landscape in Australia in a manner which has few echoes elsewhere except in Canada.” While Bennett’s statement here glosses over the highly complex and contested relationship between cultural studies and cultural policy in Australia, it highlights the fact that the cultural policy movement has played an integral role in the formation of Australian cultural studies. Certainly, in international terms the policy strain of Australian cultural studies is seen as an integral part of the field’s overall identity (this was reflected in the inclusion of two cultural policy figures out of four Australian cultural studies practitioners whose work was represented in Grossberg et al.’s edited Cultural Studies collection).

Central to cultural policy studies has been the work of two theorists based at Griffith University in Queensland, namely Tony Bennett and Ian Hunter, both of whom have sought to critically rework Foucault’s writings along cultural policy lines. In particular, policy studies at Griffith has been concerned with utilising Foucault’s notion of governmentality in order to reconceptualise the role of the cultural studies intellectual. Translating Foucault’s notion of the specific intellectual into a pragmatic policy-oriented framework, Bennett in particular has argued that cultural studies needs to shift its emphasis

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531 Beilharz 129.
532 Bennett, “Cultural Studies: A Reluctant Discipline,” 541.
533 See, for instance, the debate that took place in 1992 in the Australian journal Meanjin (volume 51 issue number 3) between cultural studies practitioners such as Meaghan Morris and Bronwyn Levy and a number of more policy-oriented intellectuals including Ian Hunter, Stuart Cunningham and Tom O’Regan.
away from a model of intellectualism founded upon cultural criticism (a model that is especially dominant in the British context where it is tied to literary criticism). Instead, he suggests that “cultural studies might envisage its role as consisting in the training of cultural technicians: that is, of intellectual workers less committed to cultural critique as an instrument for changing consciousness than to modifying the functioning of culture by means of technical adjustments to its governmental deployment.”

While Bennett’s critique of the role of the “traditional” intellectual has been attacked by theorists (including Morris) who are concerned with retaining the critical dimension of cultural studies work, at the same time his rejection of an “aesthetic” model of intellectualism in favour of a pragmatic set of intellectual practices strikes a chord with the grounded politics of intellectualism that has tended to underpin Australian cultural studies practices. While a figure like Morris would certainly not situate herself in the cultural policy studies camp, she and other Australian cultural studies theorists nevertheless tend to bear an affinity with its strategic and flexible modes of intellectualism. Furthermore, the active role that many intellectuals like Morris take in public policy concerns reflects the close (albeit contested) relationship between the state and the academy in a country that has, for much of this century, been driven by the politics of social democracy. Thus, the field of cultural policy studies first emerged in the early eighties when a new Labour government expressed its concern with supporting and funding the “culture industries,” a political platform that was consolidated by the release of cultural policy documents and statements such as Paul Keating’s (the most recent Labour prime minister) concept of Australia as a “Creative Nation.”

Furthermore, during the eighties and the nineties, the cultural policy movement developed an extensive infrastructural network forging connections between cultural studies and the legal bureaucracy, the tourist sector, and the media and communications industry. The expansion and consolidation of the movement has also seen the formation of such powerful institutional bases as the Australian Key Centre for Cultural and Media Policy (which is run by three Queensland Universities and which produces major publications such as the journal *Culture*

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535 As I noted earlier, however, Bennett recently left Griffith to take up the position of professor of sociology at the Open University.


537 *Creative Nation: Commonwealth Cultural Policy*, (Canberra: Dept of Communications and the Arts, 1994).
It must be noted, however, that the recent institutionalisation of cultural policy studies has also been accompanied by a growing critique of the state’s role in the education sector. Following the restructuring of tertiary education that began with the Keating government and continued with the present Liberal government, and the massive cuts to the university system that have occurred under the Liberals, the role of the policy intellectual has become both increasingly crucial and increasingly fraught, a process that has served to re-emphasise the importance of the *critical* role of the cultural studies academic and the importance of a well-funded university system for the maintenance of that critical role.

While cultural policy studies represents only one strand within a diverse Australian cultural studies field, and a highly contested one at that, as I have suggested its pragmatic approach to intellectual practice parallels some broader themes within Australian cultural studies in general, themes which I have tried to highlight in my discussion of Morris’ specific biography. In particular, both cultural policy and cultural studies share an intellectual genealogy that has marked by mobility, that is, by an ability to cross boundaries whether they be disciplinary, institutional or, as in the case of the widespread use within cultural (policy) studies of French theory, cultural. In the next section of this chapter, then, I want to examine some of the specific models of intellectual practice that Morris discusses in her work. In particular, I discuss those models that incorporate the questions of class, institutional, and trans-national mobility raised in this chapter. Furthermore, following on from my discussion in the opening section of located cosmopolitanism, I also link the general theme of mobility that has run through this chapter with the question of “Australian-ness” and national location, an issue which I think strongly flavours the kind of cosmopolitanism associated with the field of Australian cultural studies and which, along with the issues of multiculturalism and indigeneity, has played a pivotal role in the development of a distinctly Australian set of cultural studies practices. At the same time I sound a note of caution regarding the use of cosmopolitan models of culture, noting, in particular, the tendency for such models to

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539 Tony Bennett, “Cultural Studies: A Reluctant Discipline,” 539-541.
marginalise questions of national specificity and cultural difference. Accordingly, by focusing on the politics of race and nationalism in Australia, I suggest that the models of culture performed by the discourse of Australian multiculturalism, by certain Aboriginal figureheads, and by the grounded cosmopolitanism of Morris and Australian cultural studies represents a particularly complex reflection of the interrelations between local, national and transnational culture. I argue then that as cultural studies seeks to increasingly reimagine its project within a globalising framework it might look to these kinds of models for a way of politically situating such a project.

III. THE POLITICS OF INTELLECTUAL LOCATION

i. The Economics of Mobility: The Petty-bourgeois and the Freelance Intellectual

As my discussion of Morris’ class and geographic origins and her experiences of social and cultural mobility suggests, Morris’ intellectual career can be characterised as one of a series of “shifting locations.” However, rather than merely celebrating mobility, much of Morris’ work attempts to make transparent the material conditions that have enabled her to produce the kind of theory that “travels.” Central to this self-conscious awareness of the socially produced nature of her own intellectual location, then, is a particular concern with both the economics of intellectual mobility and the cultural economy of globalisation, two interrelated issues that have also played a central role in the success of Australian cultural studies. In this section of the chapter I discuss some of the approaches to intellectual practice Morris has offered up as a way of dealing with these complex questions of mobility.

Despite her claims to an extra-academic, avant-garde intellectual legacy, Morris is sceptical of the notion of a truly marginal, extra-institutional intellectual practice given the economic and material realities of contemporary intellectual labour. Thus, in her writing she actively works to ironicise her own legitimatory claims to intellectual freedom by questioning the utility of the academic/freelance dichotomy and suggesting the overwhelmingly institutional nature of all intellectual work. In her introductory essay to The Pirate’s Fiancée, for instance, Morris deconstructs the commonly held notion that theoretical activity only occurs within the walls of the academy and that theoreticians operate on an intellectual plane remote from the politics of everyday life. In contrast, she argues that the institution of the academy
is one whose activities cannot be separated out from a whole series of other spheres where theoretical and intellectual debates occur such as the art world, reading groups, public forums, the film industry etc.. Discussing her own work as a film critic who became interested in the way theoretical concerns circulate within popular culture, Morris argues that her observations about the way in which knowledge circulates within contemporary culture made it increasingly difficult for her to talk about the popular and the academic as if they were completely separate spheres. Morris goes on to suggest that it can be argued that it is the “incessant ‘shuttling’ (of personnel as well as of activities) into other social sites [that] characterizes a primary function of the academy in post-industrial societies.”

Central to Morris’ problematisation of the tendency towards viewing the activities of the academy as somehow disconnected from broader socio-cultural processes is the concern that such notions tend to be accompanied by a fairly simplistic understanding of the relations between intellectuals and hegemonic social structures; relations that again tend to be viewed in terms of a dichotomy between intellectual complicity versus oppositionality. While Morris is critical of the kind of theoretical complacency that can sometimes accompany academically-oriented forms of knowledge, she is equally sceptical of the notion that intellectuals through their institutional affiliations with the world of policy or academia are somehow automatically de-radicalised. Thus, in her essay “Banality in Cultural Studies,” she comments on the need for a more complex notion of positionality and social power in relation to intellectual practice and the popular; a model that is able to comprehend “the critical practice of a feminism (for example) already situated both by the knowledge and social experience of insecurity and dispossession, and by a politics of exercising established institutional powers.”

One model of intellectual location that Morris has turned to in order to think through these problematics is that put forward by Scott Lash and John Urry in *The End of Organized Capitalism*. For Morris, Lash and Urry’s thesis that contemporary intellectuals represent a segment of a broader New Class of petty-bourgeois “information or ‘culture’ specialists...[represents]...an excellent and persuasive description of some of its (and my)

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Located somewhere below the Professional Managerial Class within the social order, Lash and Urry’s petty-bourgeois intellectuals lead “a generally uprooted and institutionally ‘nomadic’ existence.” Relying upon the “culture industry” for authority and intellectual legitimation, these flexible and mobile cultural workers operate within, and move between, a variety of cultural markets.

Similarly, in her essay “A Gadfly Bites Back,” Morris defends a model of intellectualism based around mobility and flexibility, describing herself as I noted in the introduction to this chapter as “a freelance, or ‘gadfly’, intellectual.” Morris’ conception of “freelance,” here, marks a foregrounding rather than a rejection of the materially grounded nature of all intellectual work, with the term capturing her own social, institutional and class location as a member of a flexible, mobile stratum of cultural workers who effectively sell their skills to various “markets.” As she puts it “like most feminists in the culture industries (including journalism and the arts), I usually sell my work to markets — tiny markets, niche markets, but real ones nevertheless.” The free-lance intellectual then is paradoxically not “free” of institutional pressures and ties at all but rather, like the petty-bourgeois intellectual, is a product of the cultural marketplace. This thorough imbrication in the economics of cultural (re)production, however, does not prohibit a critical function but instead means that the critical and functional roles of cultural intellectuals cannot be neatly separated out. Thus, interrogating policy theorist Stuart Cunningham’s absolutist distinction between the critical and the policy role of intellectuals, Morris argues that such distinctions have little relevance when it comes to describing the intellectual practices of the mobile cultural worker. For example, a figure like Sneja Gunew who engages in different intellectual practices for different audiences, or as Morris terms it “multivariate critical strategies,” exemplifies the modus operandi of this New Class of intellectuals, a group whose intellectual labour is necessarily caught up in both specific, policy-oriented or economic concerns and critical practices.

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Overall, Morris’ conception of intellectual mobility is one underpinned by a critical materialist understanding of intellectual work as grounded in sites of power. Accordingly, the mobility of the petty-bourgeois or freelance intellectual is seen as socially produced. Unlike many cultural leftists, however, Morris does not see the role of the flexible cultural worker as necessarily one of cooption and constraint but rather is interested in the ways in which new and critical forms of intellectual practice are enabled by the “nomadic ‘class’ position” of the petty-bourgeois cultural intellectual.\footnote{Morris, “A Small Serve of Spaghetti,” 474.} For instance, she argues that a positive by-product of the cultural worker’s (enforced) mobility between spheres of cultural activity involves the questioning of “the permanence and stability of our disciplinary (or ‘career’) identities as intellectuals today.”\footnote{Morris, “A Small Serve of Spaghetti,” 479.} For Morris, this means more than just espousing an ethos of interdisciplinarity. Rather “intellectuals should start practicing a number of esoteric knowledges, learning a number of cultural ‘languages’, rather than specializing in one.”\footnote{Morris, “A Small Serve of Spaghetti,” 479.} Furthermore, this also means reassessing the terms and contexts of political leftism in relation to intellectual practices, an issue that has proved a long term concern for Morris who has leftist sympathies but is highly critical of what she sees as the left’s rather limited approach to contemporary culture. Again this involves forging cultural alliances across disciplinary and professional boundaries and eschewing narrow conceptions of the political sphere. As Morris argues in “Politics Now (Anxieties of a Petty-Bourgeois Intellectual)” in a discussion of leftist concerns over the death of radical politics, “the elements for a renewed radical and critical political culture are already available, right now, in all spheres of activity.”\footnote{Meaghan Morris, “Politics Now (Anxieties of a Petty-Bourgeois Intellectual),” The Pirate’s Fiancée 182.} A major concern for Morris, then, has been to translate the mobility of the flexible cultural worker into a pragmatic politics based around the recognition that the cultural studies practitioner is located and operates within various institutional sites and markets.

\section*{ii. Australian Cosmopolitanism and the Politics of Grounded Mobility}

Another related concern that has been central to both Morris’ work and the critical oeuvre of Australian cultural studies in general has been the question of “what it means to speak and
write as an Australian in a ‘globalizing’ cultural economy.’ As my discussion of Morris’ intellectual career demonstrates, the formation of Australian cultural studies has not only entailed the crossing of numerous institutional boundaries it has also involved a constant cross-cultural interchange which has resulted in a particularly cosmopolitan intellectual formation. While its influences and outlook are thoroughly transnational, the kind of cosmopolitanism that characterises Australian cultural studies figures like Morris is one that I would argue has a distinctly local flavour. In particular, Australian cosmopolitanism involves a high degree of self-consciousness about national and cultural difference and location, and is therefore wary of universalising types of cosmopolitanism. Like Morris’ gadfly intellectual, the Australian cosmopolitan is a flexible, mobile figure who is also grounded in a self-reflexive politics of location.

Accordingly, one of the complex issues that is played out in Morris’ work is an acute awareness of the way that Australian intellectuals, especially those writing about Australian culture, continue to be marked by nationality and specificity in a way that American or British cultural theorists are not. In “Afterthoughts on ‘Australianism’,” an essay published in the international journal Cultural Studies in 1992, Morris interrogates the universalist assumptions underpinning certain types of “metropolitan internationalism,” emphasising the “uneven distribution of labour” that marks the process of translation between metropolitan and “non-metropolitan” theory. While British and American theorists may see their theories of postmodernity or postcolonialism as having global applicability, Morris’ critiques of universalism suggest that all theory whether it comes from the margins or the centres of intellectual production has a cultural or national “specificity” and therefore requires a degree of “translation” and re-contextualisation.

For the metropolitan internationalist, however, this awareness of the need for intellectuals to translate their work for other audiences, cultures and intellectual sites is a difficult skill to learn given that it is the product of a certain “in-between” or border-crossing status, one that is associated in particular with Anglo-Australian figures like Morris whose intellectual formation has been marked both by privilege and marginality. Morris’ discussion of “settler

553 Morris, Ecstacy and Economics 8.
subjectivity,” for example, foregrounds the complexity of her own hybridised location as an intellectual caught between a “metropolitan internationalism” and a kind of critical nationalism. Rather than conceptualising Australians as a nation of migrants as John Hartley does in his article “Expatriation: Useful Astonishment as Cultural Studies,” Morris argues that Australian cultural studies should claim the ambiguous status of “settler subjectivity” as a marker of its (uncertain) national and cultural identity. For Australian theorists, accepting the status of settler subjectivity means being “oddly placed by contemporary cultural studies.” As Morris observes, “dubiously postcolonial, prematurely postmodern, constitutively multicultural but still predominantly white, we oscillate historically between identities as colonizer and colonized.” Obviously referring in part to her own status within international cultural studies, Morris notes that the ambiguity of settler identity means that “we are sometimes caustic Cassandras in Anglophone cultural studies: accustomed to being objects as well as subjects of experiment for global ‘restructuring’ programmes, always thinking (as Hartley so exactly points out) in terms of identity in exchange, we are practiced and prescient readers of prevailing trends in international trade. We rarely expect to affect them.” Here Morris’ specific discussion of the notion of a “settler subjectivity” provides a powerful insight into an Australian culture that has been forged through an awareness of its own contingency as a nation-state; a nation that as Beilharz argues has always been caught between cosmopolitanism and provincialism, localism and globalism. What this peculiar cultural location produces is a crucial critical viewpoint of the metropolitan centre. As Beilharz puts it, “[f]rom the edge of the world system the relationship between power and culture shows very clearly in silhouette.”

This critical view from the margins is one of the main characteristics that distinguishes Australian cultural studies from its Anglophone counterparts. Furthermore, I would suggest that the recent rise to prominence of Australian cultural studies within the international cultural studies community reflects to some extent a recognition of the critical utility of this Australian mode of located cosmopolitanism, and in particular represents a response to the increasing need for the rapidly internationalising field of cultural studies to actively foreground the politics of geo-cultural location. As Morris has pointed out, one of the

problems of a uniformly cosmopolitanised cultural studies is that it tends to erase the specificity and difference that marks local/national intellectual formations. The politics of location, as they are played out in the Australian cultural studies arena, offer one particularly productive way for a globalising cultural studies to not only reimagine cosmopolitanism in more localised terms but to also rethink the politics of nationalism along more critical lines.

Conclusion: Race, Ethnicity, and Identity in Australia: Towards an Inter-Nationalist Localism

One of the main theorists who has contributed to debates around nationalism and cosmopolitanism within cultural studies is Kuan-Hsing Chen, an American-educated, Taiwanese-born and based cultural studies practitioner. Central to Chen’s argument is that, rather than privileging the category of the nation, cultural studies needs to emphasise what he terms a “new internationalist localism.”

Chen contends that, more than any other intellectual movement, cultural studies has sought to breach the global/local gap by committing itself to both a local and an internationalist politics. A defining characteristic of cultural studies he suggests is that “it never pretends to a universality of cultural analysis and openly acknowledges the relative autonomy of cultures in different geopolitical locations.” At the same time, he argues that by actively seeking an organic relationship with various social and political movements cultural studies has also come to recognise the fact that certain structures of domination are globalised. This has led to an acknowledgment that “[a]lthough the specificities and intensities of oppression vary from place to place, gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity and class have been the central co-ordinating categories across geographical, national, and regional boundaries.”

By attempting to forge an organic relationship with these political formations, cultural studies has necessarily shifted between local and global analyses. What concerns Chen, however, is the way in which the local has tended to be framed in terms of an essentialised nationalism. He argues instead that cultural studies in the West needs to look to the tradition of internationalist thought of those nations involved in the broad decolonisation movement, a

560 Beilharz 123.
movement which has sought to build networks across national and regional boundaries and has attempted to decentre metropolitan intellectual practices. Chen concludes that now that cultural studies is gaining increasing recognition as an international intellectual formation it is especially important for it to break free once and for all from the strictures of nationalism and in particular from “the colonial cultural imaginary” that for Chen underpins nationalist discourse.  

In the last section of this chapter, I turn to some of the issues that Chen, and the discourse of cosmopolitanism in general, raise for international cultural studies by specifically focusing on the politics of nationalism and race in Australia, a topic that Morris has been increasingly concerned with in her work. I would suggest that Chen’s notion of an inter-nationalist localism offers a useful model for enabling a globalising cultural studies to imagine a complex politics of location. However, in contrast to Chen, I would argue that the discourse of nationalism is not inherently conservative and that it can be articulated to leftist concerns. Furthermore, I would argue that the national and the cosmopolitan are mutually constitutive and therefore cannot be separated out as easily as he seems to suggest. A recontextualisation of the (often American-oriented) issues of cosmopolitanism, localism and nationalism within an Australian cultural studies setting—where as Graeme Turner observes, some of the central cultural debates “have to do with specifically postcolonial formations of nation and national identity and with strategies for fracturing or multiplying the dominant formations of that national identity”—places into question the rather universalist way in which these issues have been dealt with in so-called “international” debates. For example, while nationhood in Britain “is the unquestioned category which needs never to be spoken” and in America the “nation is ritually spoken in order to universalise itself,” in Australia the nation is a “primary problematic” marking a site of contingency and contestation. Thus, what an Australian-based approach offers in terms of theorising an internationalist/localist cultural studies is a sense of the critical contingency of its national identity in the face of a diversity of internal pressures to recognise cultural difference and an acute awareness of the impact of processes

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of globalisation on a nation that is relatively geographically and culturally marginal. The dilemmas of local/global culture and identity currently being debated within international cultural studies have been played out in Australia most powerfully at the level of race and ethnicity. What I want to do in this next section, then, is to briefly discuss questions of race politics in Australia in order to rethink some of the oppositional politics that has emerged out of the localism/nationalism versus cosmopolitanism debate. Using Australia’s hybridised local/cosmopolitan culture as an example, then, I want to move towards a cultural studies model that offers a way of thinking through the politics of mobility and location in a more complex way. What follows then is a brief discussion of two key areas of racial politics in Australia; that is, multiculturalism (examined here specifically in relation to Jon Stratton and Ien Ang’s comparative essay on US and Australian multiculturalism) and Aboriginal politics (as discussed in Morris’ recent writings on Australian republicanism). This discussion works firstly to highlight the fact that the politics of nationalism can be tied to a culturally progressive project and secondly to show that the discourse of nationalism inevitably intersects with local and transnational cultural trajectories.

As Jon Stratton has recently commented in relation to the introduction of the notorious White Australia policy (based on the Immigration Restriction Act introduced in 1901, the year in which Australia’s colonies united and became a federated nation-state), “[m]ore obviously than in most Western nation-states, the discourse of race has played a fundamental part in the attempt to construct in Australia what was considered to be a ‘homogeneous’ population.” Despite the post-war influx into Australia of large numbers of non-Anglo migrants and the subsequent dismantling of the White Australia policy in the sixties and seventies, the recent emergence of Pauline Hanson and her “One Nation” party (whose platform in the 1998 federal election was largely based on an anti-Aboriginal, anti-Asian migrant stance) confirms the continuing role played by race in defining Australian nationhood. To a large degree, however, recent debates about nationalism in Australia have increasingly moved away from the kind of static and crude model of racial essentialism that characterised Hanson’s extreme brand of race politics towards more complex and contested conceptions of Australian identity. In particular, the recent revival of debates over Australia becoming a republic has seen an intensification of the struggle over the meanings of an Australian identity. These

570 Stratton 12-13.
debates have highlighted the plurality and contingency of narratives of Australian-ness as Australia is variously and often contradictorily positioned as an *almost* post-colonial nation on the brink of making the final break from its British colonial master; as a multicultural society; as a nation that still owes allegiance to Britain and the monarchy; as a part of Asia; and as a nation of settlers in an ongoing relationship of colonisation with the original inhabitants. The two sites at which debates over national identity have been particularly intense are the politics of multiculturalism and the struggle over Aboriginal rights.

In their recent essay comparing and contrasting the “multicultural imagined communities” of the USA and Australia, Jon Stratton and Ien Ang\textsuperscript{571} illustrate the ways in which issues of race, ethnicity and national identity are articulated in very different ways in different cultural settings. The main premise of their argument is that in the US the discourse of multiculturalism is seen as *dividing* a nation in which Americans are first and foremost defined by the liberal discourse of citizenship rather than by race. In contrast, in Australia ethnicity, and in particular multiculturalism, is seen for the most part “as integral to Australian national culture and identity.”\textsuperscript{572} Attributing the contrasting meaning of multiculturalism in America and Australia to “the fundamentally different ways in which national identity is constructed in the two contexts”\textsuperscript{573} their analysis emphasises the problems inherent in overly generalist conceptions of race, identity and nationalism. In particular, they note that the kinds of theories of the nation state utilised in such analyses are often formulated according to specifically European experiences of nationhood and therefore are not so readily applied to “settler” countries like the US and Australia.

In the Australian case, for instance, its national identity was from the outset a site of intrinsic contradiction marked by a simultaneous desire for autonomy from Britain and an inability to break completely with its European ties. As Ang and Stratton note, the US forged a clean and decisive break with the “Old World” by legislating its own conditions of national unity and identity via the state apparatus. In contrast, Australia’s break with imperial Britain was much more gradual while its attempts at defining its national identity at a policy level tended to utilise race or ethnicity-based models rather than the constitutional language of citizenship.


\textsuperscript{572} Stratton and Ang, “Multicultural Imagined Communities,” 136.
Adopting the discourse of multiculturalism as a cultural policy in the late-sixties, then, not only helped Australia to assert its independence from the “mother country” it also enabled a dramatic shift in the hegemonic construction of Australian nationhood. Instead of clinging on to the earlier conception of Australian identity as a homogenous culture, Ang and Stratton argue that multiculturalism ushered in a new model of identity in which the focus moved from that of the unified nation to ethnicity with Australia being reconceptualised as a “space in which many (ethnically defined) imagined communities live and interact.” While, unlike the radical, grassroots nature of multicultural politics in the US, Australian multiculturalism represented a state policy imposed from above, nevertheless it has created a space in which difference could be recognised and made visible. As Ang and Stratton argue it has provided a medium for dealing with identity and difference which is neither separatist nor assimilationist. That is, because Australian multiculturalism expressly incorporates ethnic difference within the space of the national, it provides a framework for a politics of negotiation over the very content of the national culture, which is no longer imagined as something fixed and historically given but as something in the process of becoming.

At the same time, however, they note that the limits of state multiculturalism include the tendency to synthesise cultural difference into “a harmonious unity-in-diversity,” a tendency they argue can be seen as emerging from the same modernist conceptions underpinning the traditional notion of the unified nation. They note that the limits of this unity-in-diversity model of multiculturalism are highlighted when it comes to questions of race and, in particular, the kind of racial difference signified by Aboriginality. As Ang and Stratton comment, it is impossible to incorporate Aborigines into a national narrative of

573 Stratton and Ang, “Multicultural Imagined Communities,” 137.
574 Stratton and Ang, “Multicultural Imagined Communities,” 141.
575 It should be noted here that Stratton and Ang’s essay was written at a time when the federal Labour government was strongly invested in multiculturalism at both an ideological and policy level. Since the Liberal Party gained power in 1996, however, the multicultural debate has taken a decidedly more conservative turn and has seen the government fuelling the fears of “average Australians” through its obsession with “boundary” issues such as the problem of illegal immigration and its depiction of the land claims of Aboriginal Australians as nationally divisive.
576 Stratton and Ang, “Multicultural Imagined Communities,” 151.
unified ethnicities “without erasing the memory of colonial dispossession, genocide and cultural loss and the continuing impact of that memory on Aboriginal lives.”

Despite this thorough critique of the limits of a hegemonic state multiculturalism, however, they conclude their essay on a more positive note arguing that race needs to be seen as “a symbolic marker of unabsorbable cultural difference” that can be used to fracture the consensus politics of nationalism. Rather than doing away with the politics of multiculturalism and its important focus on cultural and ethnic difference, Ang and Stratton argue that “[t]o seize on multiculturalism’s more radical potential is to give up the ideal of national unity without doing away with the promise of a flexible, and open-ended national culture.”

What Ang and Stratton’s account of the shifting relations between race, ethnicity and national identity in Australia’s history confirms is the ideological slipperiness of the discourse of nationalism. While nationalism has in the past been put to the service of a racially exclusionary model of Australian-ness in the form of the White Australia policy, the more recent shift towards conceptualising Australia as a multicultural society has been accompanied by an opening up of definitions of the national. Although this multicultural version of nationhood has in its liberal guise often been used to gloss over important issues such as Australia’s ongoing colonial relationship to Aborigines, I would argue that the current debates over national identity that Australia is undergoing have provided a critical moment for highlighting the role of race at the same time as placing into question unified models of national identity.

The site that has been especially open to such challenges is the debate over republicanism, a debate that as Jon Stratton argues is “closely associated with the culturally based concerns [underpinning the] complex of ethnicity, official multiculturalism and national identity.” While Australian republicanism is a politically institutionalised and mediatised discourse that is, at least for the Australian left, seen “as a unifying site in the representational system of

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578 Stratton and Ang, “Multicultural Imagined Communities,” 159.
579 Stratton and Ang, “Multicultural Imagined Communities,” 160.
580 Stratton and Ang, “Multicultural Imagined Communities,” 160.
581 Stratton 172.
Australian national identity, as its position within Australian public life as a prominent cultural discourse would seem to make it a useful point of intervention and articulation for a politics of indigeneity.

In a recent essay meditating on the politics of the discussion over whether or not Australia should break away from Britain and become a republic, Meaghan Morris discusses the reluctance of Australian feminists to enter into what they perceive as the largely hegemonic and masculinist nature of this debate. Just as Chen has argued that the discourse of nationalism is inherently colonialist, according to Morris Australian feminism has determined that nationalist questions such as those raised by the republican debate are rooted in a conservative, masculinist political culture. However, while the dominant discourse of republican nationalism may have been coopted by largely conservative forces, Morris suggests that rather than refusing to engage with nationalist debates feminists need to offer their own alternative accounts of Australian society and where it should be heading. Thus, instead of allowing these debates to occur within a narrow and unchallenged framework, Morris argues that a publicly interventionist approach would enable what Ann Curthoys and Stephen Muecke refer to as “a provisional reconstructive practice towards nationhood which investigates its rhetorical tactics.” As Morris notes it is precisely the “vagueness of the republican ideal” that makes it an ideal target for those groups wanting to promote other forms of cultural politics within Australia.

One of the main groups discussed by Morris which has exploited “the performative dimension and participatory potentials of a mediated public sphere” while opening up questions of nationhood to critical scrutiny, is the Aboriginal community. As Morris points out, the centrality of Aboriginal concerns to the national agenda was brought home by the impact of the Mabo decision, a specific and localised decision about land ownership that overturned the premise that Australia had been terra nullius or unoccupied land prior to the point of white settlement and introduced the concept of “native title” to Australian legal and subsequently public discourse.

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582 Stratton 169.
587 Eddie Mabo, a Torres Strait Islander, fought for the legal recognition of his family’s original ownership of colonised land. The decision to recognise Mabo’s ownership of the land in 1992 was a landmark one in the sense that it overturned the premise that Australia had been terra nullius or unoccupied land prior to the point of white settlement and introduced the concept of “native title” to Australian legal and subsequently public discourse.
has had “a nationalising force” within Australian culture. What Mabo also illustrates is the way in which “Aboriginal issues” are not restricted to questions about race but have inextricable connections to a number of other social and cultural concerns that are “fundamental to Australian life,” such as the relations between land and cultural identity.\footnote{588} Moreover, the kinds of performative and rhetorical strategies employed by Aboriginal spokespeople offer broader models for “dealing politically with first world institutions as specific intellectuals, while working from the base in Aboriginal institutions and politics that defines their organic relation to their people,”\footnote{589} that is they suggest a model for both moving between and bringing together local, national and international political concerns.

Well-known Aboriginal figures like, for instance, the lead singer of the Aboriginal rock group Yothu Yindi, Mandawuy Yunupingu and the athlete Cathy Freeman tend to represent Aboriginal issues in a performative mode that often defies neat interpretations and which pushes the boundaries of the concerns and issues that tend to be associated in the public mind with Aboriginality. Thus, while the band Yothu Yindi contains both white and Aboriginal performers and therefore “provides a convenient compendium image of a hybrid Australian national musical identity”\footnote{590} outside of Australia the group is seen as an example of “world music.”\footnote{591} Furthermore, as Morris points out in relation to Cathy Freeman’s decision to carry both the Aboriginal and the “white flag” at the 1994 Commonwealth Games, the “iconic power” of that moment was irreducible to the conventional codes of Australian nationalist and multicultural concerns thus demonstrating the fact “that the very idea of the nation [was] being redefined not only by the Australian Republican Movement.”\footnote{592}

Thus, while these strategic performances by Aboriginal intellectuals and activists foreground the fact that “our nation-building culture is the object of a reconstructive practice”\footnote{593} they also place into question the national framework underpinning that practice. As Morris notes, Australians are exposed to images of Aboriginal groups actively bypassing the legal structures of the Australian state by forging alliances with international indigenous and anti-colonial movements. At the same time the would-be unity of either a nationally or

\footnote{590} Here Mitchell is referring to a comment made by Graeme Turner. Tony Mitchell, 
\footnote{591} Mitchell 191.  
internationally-oriented Aboriginal politics is complicated by “Aboriginal regional self-government movements [which challenge] state sanctioned Aboriginal organisations” as well as those forms of “radically undiplomatic politics of critique and protest” that refuse the logic of mainstream politics altogether.  

What these diverse “performances” and political movements do is to render problematic white conceptions of a uniform Aboriginal identity while fracturing a purely nationally-based political imaginary along local, regional and international lines. To this end, Stephen Muecke has commented on the ways in which Aboriginal people have strategically utilised the moral authority of the international community to promote their own local causes going on to argue that “Aboriginality is poised for the moment as an emblem of symbolic exchange with other parts of the world. Common histories of colonial exploitation are their lingua franca.” Thus, while Aboriginal people have recently intervened in nationalist debates in order to open up a space of recognition for their claims to prior occupation in the current battle for land rights, they have also utilised the international discourse of human rights to bring the pressure of the so-called international community to bear on the Australian government. For instance, Aboriginal groups have threatened to boycott the Sydney Olympics in 2000 as a means of exploiting its international event status for local/national ends.

By taking up various subject positions such as that of the colonial subaltern, Australian Aboriginal people have reframed their local political concerns within the internationalist discourse of anti-colonial and human rights movements thereby enacting Chen’s politics of internationalist localism. However, as my discussion of race and ethnic politics in Australia suggests, there are no easy distinctions to be drawn between a local/global and a nationalist politics—indeed, to privilege one over the other is to misrecognise the ultimately strategic and contextual nature of identity politics. Furthermore, such distinctions are often premised on a celebration of the local/global axis over the national. As I have discussed in this chapter, however, globalism represents a double edged sword for more marginal nations like Australia whose local culture(s) are more susceptible to the pressures of economic and cultural internationalisation than metropolitan centres. At the same time, as both Ang and

593 Morris, “Lunching for the Republic,” 244.
Stratton and Morris’ essays demonstrate, the politics of nationhood is not inherently conservative and can be rearticulated to more radical ends. Moreover, as Morris suggests, a local/global race politics that ignores the national is unlikely to have much impact on the hegemonic processes that continue to structure both local and global cultural identities. As she contends

[o]ne generality useful to feminist critics that arises from the cosmopolitan example of Aboriginal media practices is that the possible nations we theorise can take shape in struggles to transform an actual nation; in this perspective on practice, the venerable opposition between identity politics, with their transversely local and transnational force, and a national politics thought only in terms of closure and containment, is itself of limited and local value.596

Instead of the politics of oppositionality held up by cultural models that privilege cosmopolitan or diasporic discourses over the national, Morris here endorses the kind of politics of articulation that has characterised much of the intellectual practices of the cultural studies theorists discussed in this thesis. Within this latter model, a politics that engages with the discourses of nationalism is one concerned with contexts and strategies of action rather than processes of identification. As Morris points out, while the radical politics of environmentalism, gay liberation and Aboriginal land rights have all at times directed their energies at state policies and structures in order to effect change at a national level, to be involved in the process of national politics “is not the same as being subsumed by, limited to, or identified with a particular process.”597 What these political movements share is a discursive rather than an essentialist conception of nationalism and the nation-state. They therefore recognise that these discourses are the products of historical, cultural and political forces and are therefore open to contestation. Commenting that the nationalist concerns of identity politics lie not with hegemonic notions of “a common good” or with “the national interest,” Morris argues that it is “[f]or this very reason, [that] they can construe both the state and the nation as practical sites of struggle and experiment.”598

In this chapter I have focused on Meaghan Morris as an exemplar of a certain kind of Australian cosmopolitan intellectual practice. While Australian cultural studies is an ostensibly national formation, as I have shown it emerged out of the intersection of a number of local, national and transnational intellectual and political trajectories. These intersections have produced a hybridised set of intellectual practices as well as a particularly reflexive brand of identity politics. While these practices and politics are a product of Australia’s distinctive location within the Anglo-American cultural studies community, I have suggested this same broader community might learn something from the grounded models of mobility and cosmopolitanism put forward by Australian cultural studies figures like Morris.

Emerging out of a cultural location where local, national and state politics are seen as sites of active struggle and contestation that bear a mutually constitutive rather than an oppositional relationship with broader processes of globalisation and trans-nationalism, Australian cultural studies demonstrates an approach to the politics of intellectual practice that is becoming increasingly relevant to a globalising cultural studies formation; that is, a cosmopolitanism that is seen as emerging out of—rather than transcending—the politics of the local.
POSTSCRIPT
SITUATING THE INTELLECTUAL: TOWARDS A COMPARATIVE LOCALISM

By discussing the four intellectuals analysed in this thesis in relation to the historiographic and disciplinary framework of cultural studies, I sought to focus on the specificity of all intellectual work while also situating that work within a broader social, institutional, disciplinary and cultural setting. Thus, in Parts One and Three of this thesis, I moved between biographical accounts of the intellectual development of Hall and Morris respectively, and the broader issues raised by their location within a cultural studies field variously formed and structured by the politics of cultural identity, class, gender and institutionality. In Part Two, my analysis of the intellectual practices and politics of Ross and Grossberg also worked to foreground wider structural questions, this time in relation to the (largely) academic and disciplinary location of cultural studies practitioners, and the increasingly professionalised nature of contemporary intellectual work. In mapping out the wider, structural contexts in which cultural studies practitioners necessarily operate, I sought to counter the voluntarist tendencies underpinning many models of intellectualism by showing that intellectual agency is produced through, rather than purely constrained by, its articulation with these structures. At the same time, in grounding my analysis in the lives and careers of specific intellectuals, I strove to equally problematise functionalist accounts in which the social agency of intellectuals is seen as a simple reflection of their position relative to, as Bourdieu puts it, the “structure of the overall space in which they are situated.”

As my examination of the careers of these four intellectuals indicates, while a crucial set of relations exists between their individual intellectual projects and the broader social, political and cultural contexts in which they operate, those relations are complex and at times contradictory.

This tension between accounting for the role of both structure and agency in intellectual practice intersects with another key theme running through the thesis, the issue of contextualist versus more abstract, theoretical approaches to understanding intellectual formations. As I noted in the preface to the thesis, one of the major limitations of most models of intellectualism is their tendency to construct an a priori framework through which all intellectual practices are then interpreted. The problem with this kind of blanket approach

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is that it erases the differences between such practices while reducing complex forms of intellectual agency to often monocausal or either/or models of power. In contrast, I have adopted an approach that, while broad-based and theoretical, is informed by Meaghan Morris’ definition of cultural studies as “a question-driven, not a doctrine or answer-driven, practice.” As I discussed in my introductory chapter, this approach is strongly influenced by cultural studies’ own methodologies, in particular, the radical contextualism of articulation theory. Thus, rather than “‘applying’ a pre-existing theory to a given empirical field,” in this thesis I have attempted to conceive of the theoretical as emerging as “a response to...specific practices and contexts.”

As Morris points out, within articulation theory contexts are seen as shifting and dynamic formations. Accordingly, emphasising the relationship between contexts and practices necessitates a more fluid approach in which intellectual formations are themselves seen as dynamic and in process. In focusing on the role of context, my thesis has highlighted the changing nature of the social and cultural relations that frame intellectual work and has accordingly foregrounded the need for intellectual models that take into account contemporary cultural transformations. For example, one of the crucial questions that has arisen out of my thesis, particularly in relation to my discussion of Ross and Grossberg as professionalised intellectuals and my analysis of Morris’ writings on class and institutional mobility, is the breakdown of the traditionally conceived divide between culture and capital. In particular, the increasingly blurred distinction between economic and cultural spheres under late-capitalism means that intellectual work in contemporary society is now thoroughly enmeshed in governmental and economic institutions and processes. While most accounts that engage with the economics of intellectual practice continue to view professionalism and criticality as oxymoronic, in this thesis I have sought to constructively examine the institutionalised nature of contemporary intellectual work by foregrounding a field whose intellectual practices are engaged, critical and at the same time largely academicised. As Tony Bennett points out in Culture: A Reformer’s Science, “the dynamics of higher education have played a key role in shaping the intellectual agendas of cultural studies.” While cultural studies is not alone here, one of the reasons I chose to focus on the intellectual

600 Meaghan Morris, “A Question of Cultural Studies,” Back to Reality 44.
603 Bennett, Culture: A Reformer’s Science 2.
practices in this field is because it offers productive ways for thinking through the apparent paradox of critical institutionality. Given its concerns with engaging with everyday culture and, in particular, with the ways in which culture and power intersect in contemporary society, cultural studies is well placed for (re)imagining forms of intellectual work that are located within hegemonic structures and are at the same time critical and transformative.

In particular, what the critical practices of the intellectuals under examination in this thesis gesture towards is the changing meaning of “engaged” intellectual work not only in cultural studies but in the humanities more generally. For example, the intellectual projects of Ross, Grossberg, and Morris, while underpinned by a critical and “counter-hegemonic” politics, are crucially characterised by their pragmatic responses to the challenge of professionalism and institutionality thereby demonstrating the viability of an institutionally-grounded, critical intellectual practice. The extra-academic practices and cross-institutional mobility of figures like Hall, Ross and Morris, however, reflect their ongoing concern with performing the kind of broader “public” role associated with Said’s “representational” model of intellectualism—although self-consciously “authorised” by forms of cultural and institutional capital and without recourse to Said’s “universal values.” In contrast, the radical pedagogical and scholarly practices of a figure like Grossberg are grounded in a mode of intellectual work that is both specific and engaged. Thus, while Grossberg’s efforts are primarily directed towards the academy, what is crucial about Grossberg’s brand of cultural studies practice is that the university system is seen as both a critical, political, social and cultural site in its own right and also as a sphere that has a powerful influence on broader public processes. Simon During’s recent comments in the introduction to the second edition of The Cultural Studies Reader, for example, give a sense of the kind of critical, academicised model of intellectualism performed by Grossberg; as During puts it, “engaged cultural studies is academic work (teaching, research, dissemination etc) on contemporary culture from non-elite or counter-hegemonic perspectives (‘from below’) with an openness to the culture’s reception and production in everyday life.”

This grounding of intellectual work within a specific site while at the same time working to “disseminate” the critical effects of that work parallels another important theme connecting

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the intellectual practices of the figures in this thesis, that is the question of cosmopolitanism. As I have noted, the increasingly globalised nature of culture has led to a broad shift towards theorising cultural practices in more cosmopolitan terms. However, for a number of theorists, particularly those outside or on the margins of the Anglo-American intellectual community, the uneven and unequal effects of globalisation suggest the need for retaining a sense of the way in which globalisation is articulated in different ways at different local and national sites. Accordingly, the kind of approach championed by many left cultural theorists is based on the kind of “rooted” cosmopolitanism practised and performed by cultural studies intellectuals like Meaghan Morris. This growing sense of the importance of a critical and politicised conception of cultural identity and location has been particularly marked in the field of cultural studies where Grossberg has argued for “a geographic approach to the local” and Jameson has emphasised the importance of a “geo-politics.” Likewise, what my discussion of the diverse intellectual practices and sites of cultural studies indicates is the necessity of an approach to intellectual work that is grounded and cosmopolitan. Furthermore, what my thesis suggests is the importance of a geo-politics that is also comparative.

In the introductory chapter to his recent book The Spectre of Comparisons, Benedict Anderson, recounting one of his experiences working as a translator in Indonesia, discusses the strange experience of viewing Europe “as through an inverted telescope.”

605 Explaining that the title of his book is borrowed from a phrase in José Rizal’s nationalist novel Noli Me Tangere, Anderson muses:

[t]here is a dizzying moment early in the narrative when the young mestizo hero, recently returned to the colonial Manila of the 1880s from a long sojourn in Europe, looks out of his carriage window at the municipal botanical gardens, and finds that he too is, so to speak, at the end of an inverted telescope. These gardens are shadowed automatically...and inescapably by images of their sister gardens in Europe. He can no longer matter-of-factly experience them, but sees them simultaneously close up and from afar. The novelist arrestingly names the agent of this incurable doubled vision el demonio de las comparaciones [or] the spectre of comparisons.

As growing numbers of cultural studies sites and formations become interpellated as members of an international, intellectual community this sense of a doubled or comparative vision is becoming increasingly crucial. By comparing the intellectual practices of British, American and Australian cultural studies practitioners, I have tried to problematise the notion of one coherent, transnational cultural studies project suggesting instead a diversity of localised transnationalisms or globalisms. As Anderson’s quote suggests, however, a comparative geo-politics only really works to destabilise and disorient one’s perspective when it forces the meeting of two radically disparate visions or perspectives. While my inclusion of Australian cultural studies creates a certain “estrangement effect” in relation to the hegemonic categories of Anglo-American thought, I would suggest that as cultural studies moves towards a truly trans-national geo-political agenda it will need to embrace “other” cultural studies perspectives such as those of Latin-America, Asia and Africa, as well as critical, “new” regionalisms such as Paul Gilroy’s “Black Atlantic” and Stephen Muecke’s (related) notion of a transnational cultural studies centred around the Indian Ocean.  

Whether located at the centre or the margins of metropolitan intellectual culture, however, what I have tried to suggest in my thesis is the importance of the kind of “comparative cosmopolitanism” figured in Robbins’ globalised discourse; that, is a cosmopolitanism that is always conditioned by its local circumstances and that, for intellectuals, is always caught up in structures of (relative) privilege. As Robbins comments from his own perspective as an American-based academic, the role and status of the contemporary intellectual is marked by both “the new worldliness of the Anglo-American humanities...reaching out to world literature and to colonial, postcolonial and minority discourse [and the] local self-interest, the social or institutional being of critics as a group.” Cosmopolitanism can easily fall into a refusal of limits (national or institutional), while localism is prone to a politically naive and reductive notion of “belonging.” As a counter to these extremes, however, Robbins argues in favour of viewing “cosmopolitanism as the provocatively impure but irreducible combination of a certain privilege at home, as part of a real belonging in institutional places, with no less real but much less common (and therefore highly desirable) extension of democratic, anti-imperial principles abroad.”

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608 Robbins, Secular Vocations 180.
609 Robbins, Secular Vocations 211.
Robbins’ comments return us to the central theme discussed in the preface of this thesis, a theme which has worked as a mediating force articulating together (rather than unifying) the varied discussions of intellectual practice offered up in this thesis. In particular, his definition of cosmopolitanism captures the apparent paradox of the privileged social location of intellectuals, in particular their close relationship to hegemonic cultural institutions, and the sense that intellectuals as a group have a responsibility, as Said puts it, to speak the truth to power. However, as noted previously, in Said’s suggested “solution” to this apparent double-bind, the tension between locality or “home” and its worldly, democratic counterpart “abroad” is a negative one based ultimately on a transcendent model of intellectual agency, while in Foucault’s model of the specific intellectual this tension is disavowed only to return through the (theoretical) backdoor as another form of universalism. In contrast, what Robbins’ model of cosmopolitanism suggests, and the “grounded” intellectual practices analysed in this thesis perform, is the need to directly engage with the complex and often uncomfortable realities that underpin critical intellectual work. From such a perspective, the notion of a critically-inhabited intellectual project becomes not so much a utopian gesture as a moment of modest pragmatics. From such a perspective, intellectuals would no longer seek to legitimate their actions in a rhetoric of truth or transcendence but instead would relocate the politics of intellectual location within a discourse of comparative localism, rooted cosmopolitanism, and critical habitations.
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