

within the academy. As currently practiced, much of cultural studies is Marxism of an unfortunately vulgar kind. Insofar as cultural studies represents a reaction against the mandarin machismo of theory in the 1980s, trying to replace the disembodiedness of many theoretical discussions with an emphasis on the social functions of literature and with attention to a much broader range of material, it has genuine claims to inaugurate a more populist and progressive critical practice. But it has also extended and confirmed the de facto eclipse of literature already evident fifteen years ago, as theory took precedence over primary works.

Although all cultural forms are now supposed to be of equal interest, there is an implicit bias in favor of the productions of international mass media and against a literary tradition seen as hopelessly elitist and retrograde. (Film studies suffers from a similar blindness; despite its roots in the cinephile culture of the 1960s, it is increasingly uninterested in either art film or experimental film.) Yet literature is obviously a central cultural form, which it would be disastrous to forget or to dismiss. To take culture seriously is to take it whole and to be interested in the connections among all its parts. Demystifying a cultural phenomenon or discovering that it was invented does not mean that it disappears or becomes insignificant. In Saussurean structuralism, the arbitrary does not become senseless simply because we understand it to be arbitrary; within the system, it is powerful despite or even in its arbitrariness. For Lévi-Strauss, too, individual cultural forms assume a kind of inevitability, because they lock into the whole matrix of culture, but his project is in the end thoroughly relativist. Barthes takes apart mythologies, yet he also acknowledges the centrality of mythmaking—and the literary—for all cultures.

Ironically, as the possibilities for interdisciplinary investigation and the number of interesting texts available for study have expanded, the range of discussion has narrowed drastically. This need not be. Recent work in the emerging field of publishing history provides fresh ways of thinking about literary institutions, from academies and cliques to newspapers and magazines; the ground has now been laid for a rethinking of the sociology of literary form. And there should be better ways now to capitalize on the wonderful republishing programs of small independent and university presses (the efforts of Virago and Pandora; the reprinting of American radical novels by the University of Illinois Press; the translation of key forgotten works of central and eastern European literature by Northwestern University Press, Quartet, Sun and Moon, and Overlook; and so on). Cultural critics like C. L. R. James, W. E. B. Du Bois, Frantz Fanon, and Siegfried Kracauer are now being rediscovered, but this is

just the tip of the iceberg, given the number of half-forgotten thinkers, programmatic and otherwise, whose work defines a larger cultural field. Leroi Jones's *Blues People* and Hans Richter's *Struggle for the Film*, the work of Aby Warburg and of the *Annales* school, the Lynds' *Middletown* and Arnold Hauser's *Social History of Art*, British Mass Observation studies and Yury Lotman's semiotic analyses of Russian cultural history all deserve new readers.

There is no need to mourn literary education as it used to be. The most devastating condemnation of the old dispensation is that, far from creating lifetime readers of difficult works, it seems to have engendered hatred, ambivalence, or indifference toward literature in so many of those who now teach it. But there is also no need for the historical amnesia that now, despite the new emphasis on disciplinary history, dominates the profession.

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From my perspective outside the United States, I understand cultural studies to encompass two possibilities. On the one hand, it might involve the study of artistic forms besides those whose medium is language and of exploitations of language beyond the imaginative or narrowly textual. On the other hand, cultural studies might provide the opportunity for a serious investigation of the workings of specific contemporary cultures. Cultural studies may be responsible for a subtle shift of interest from canonical subjects, but its overall emphasis remains conservative and domestic. The radical reorganization of literary curricula ascribed to cultural activists seems vastly exaggerated.

While I recognize that the wide-ranging conclusions of some branches of cultural studies become a pretext and an alibi for ignoring individual cases, I disagree with the critics of cultural studies who aim to contract the compass of the literary field. Studies of texts and of the conditions of their emergence belong first in the literary department rather than the cultural. All foreign literatures should be studied as literature, not as ethnic fixtures in the vast wilderness of cultural studies. To relegate post-colonial literatures, for example, to cultural studies can only comfort defenders of the canon. Literary studies ought to keep pace with every kind of literary production.

The confusion between the literary and the cultural is not only an American disorder. Some books cited in contemporary literary journals are housed in the sociology

section of my university's library and are never checked out, except by the intrepid literary scholar. Conversely, the works quoted in "cultural" journals line the literature sections of the library and enjoy occasional outings. I believe that cultural studies should be viewed as an area of interest separate from but cognate with literary studies. If literary studies should motivate interest in the factors influencing the constitution of texts, cultural studies should yield an even larger picture, which exposes the agencies affecting the emergence of other art forms and reveals the connections between these forms. The indistinct intermingling of the cultural and the literary may be very "cultural," but it is not particularly helpful for achieving the aims of either cultural or literary studies.

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There is evidence for the old idea that some literature transcends culture: works have been read with delight in different periods. Shakespeare was warmly received in a nineteenth-century America that hated kings, although there are few "Americans" in Shakespeare, few characters below the aristocracy, almost none with ideals of social mobility. And what of the reception here of Jane Austen, whose novels include almost no characters below the landed gentry? Perhaps the nineteenth-century Americans who enjoyed Shakespeare and Austen were ignorant of cultural studies and thus could encounter European class assumptions without disgust. The bliss of reading involves a good deal of ignorance—or of imagination, of suspension of disbelief. The teacher of literature, as a teacher of pleasure, can set the weight of the world aside.

Literature that does not transcend culture may benefit greatly from cultural studies. The appreciation of satires, epigrams, and sermons from earlier periods depends on historical notes, a kind of attenuated cultural studies. One might argue that cultural studies tends to turn all literature into satire or sermon. *Measure for Measure*, which does not transcend its context, can be read as satire or as commentary on the spousal Canons of 1604 or on the change of reign. The issues in the play—handfast marriage, sexual passes or harassment, and the change of political authority—make *Measure for Measure* teachable. My freshman students delight to recognize some of their concerns in it. But *Othello* is not on my freshman reading list, because in transcending culture the work forgoes this appeal.

Literature that transcends culture may be damaged or undermined by cultural studies. I think this has happened to Austen, whose early admission to the canon made academic rediscovery impossible. And it has not helped her

recent fortunes that Austen's main, almost her only, subject is the marriage of true minds. I believe that Austen now is less assigned (in high school and college), though more read, than ever; film has "taught" her works in a way that our classrooms cannot. One could argue that film and TV set the curriculum now. No wonder cultural studies seems important: it shows how culture dominated literary production and reception in the past, just as media culture controls us.

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I have a career in English largely because I serendipitously mentioned my interest in British cultural studies when I went on the job market in the mid-1980s. The literary academy was just discovering the work of the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, as the sessions on cultural studies organized by the Sociological Approaches to Literature group for the 1988 MLA meeting signaled. I had been drawing on Birmingham cultural studies since I read a review of Dick Hebdige's *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* in *Trouser Press* in 1979, and the appearance in *PMLA* of my article featuring the Sex Pistols, in 1991, might have seemed a sign that cultural studies had influenced literary studies. In fact, I was realizing that cultural studies was dead on arrival in the United States.

The effort to relate cultural studies and the literary, which has largely been futile, started at least with Raymond Williams's *The Long Revolution*, in which Williams held that "it is with the discovery of patterns" running through a variety of texts "that any useful cultural analysis begins." The goal of reconstructing these patterns should be to "reveal unexpected identities and correspondences in hitherto separately considered activities" ([Penguin, 1965] 63). The subsequent effort of British cultural studies to enlarge the range of cultural forms that counted was a political intervention, intended to counteract the views of other leftists—including, ironically, the founder of the Birmingham center, Richard Hoggart—that youth culture was worthless. In *Hiding in the Light*, Dick Hebdige describes a general "cartography of taste," in which "by pursuing a limited number of themes . . . across a fairly wide range of discourses it may be possible . . . to modify the received wisdom," both within the academy and outside it ([Routledge, 1988] 48). When confronting the literary, cultural studies ought to reveal "the extent to which one of the major functions of literary criticism as an institution" is to cordon off "those cultural forms based on mechanical and electronic reproduction" (Colin MacCabe, *The Linguis-*