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# Introduction: Deconstructing 'the Popular'

I want to tell you about some of the difficulties I have with the term 'popular'. I have almost as many problems with 'popular' as I do with 'culture'. When you put the two terms together the difficulties can be pretty horrendous.

Stuart Hall, 'Notes on Deconstructing "The Popular"' (1981: 227)

## Deconstructing . . .

In mid-January 2007, an international incident flared up. Exactly *when* it happened is debatable. And exactly *where*. Nevertheless, it provoked outrage, required the intervention of politicians, solicited many and varied discussions and reflections from cultural commentators of all kinds, required responses from official regulatory bodies, preoccupied the media, precipitated all kinds of complaints, demands, even threats and public protests, including some that involved the burning of effigies. The precise causes, the exact nature, timescale, status, significance and effects of the incident remain difficult to assess. Was it trivial or was it deadly serious? Was it local, private and isolated, or was it national, international, public and general? As some asked, was it even 'real'? For almost everything about it remains constantly open to debate, interpretation and reinterpretation. It can be regarded in many different ways, and each different perspective makes something different out of the event. Different approaches deem it to be something entirely different. Moreover, although very many of the interpretations and diagnoses appeared to contradict each other, they also seemed to remain valid: contradictory interpretations appeared to dwell together, side by side.

Perhaps the most that can be said about it all with any degree of certainty is that at first it looked like mere bickering, arguing, shouting,

and the bullying of one person by three others. Those involved were: the Bollywood actress Shilpa Shetty; a former reality TV show winner called Jade Goody; a former pop singer called Jo O'Meara; and a glamour model called Danielle Lloyd. The incident took place (it is not clear whether it came to a conclusion, played itself out, or whether it seemed to begin, flared up, or started) on the reality television show, *Celebrity Big Brother*. But it is quite difficult to put an exact date and time on it, mainly because the 'incident' was not actually 'one' incident: partial incidents led to other, partial incidents. It was instead a series of comments, encounters, exchanges, glances, actions and other events, culminating in a very loud and public argument between Jade Goody and Shilpa Shetty. But it was not *the* culmination. There were others to follow, elsewhere. Perhaps because this was a particularly vociferous argument, in which conflict was obviously apparent, it drew the spotlight of attention to the events of the show. Indeed, because it was so spectacular, this argument was in a sense taken *to be* the event. But was it? Certainly, it was the most filmable, and was replayed on television networks the world over. But it wasn't the *whole* thing, *in itself*. The *thing*, the *event*, the whole conflict or process was not entirely or simply *there*, *in* the argument. It was *more and other and elsewhere* than what was actually argued about, there and then. So, the event was both there and also not really or entirely there. In order for this 'event' to be what it was, it had in a sense to have started happening already, to have been happening already, *before* this spectacular event. And indeed it had: it had been present in snide comments, in nasty little asides and conspiratorial glances for quite some time. You might say, it had been *building up* to this, as if this were another building brick added to a series of building bricks, each one the same but different, different but equivalent; and that if it weren't for these supplements (these other equivalent but different occurrences), the main event would not have been what it was. It may not have been deemed what many deemed it to be – a racist scandal.

It was deemed by many to be the culmination of a growing manifestation of a racially based hostility to Shilpa Shetty. Racism was deemed to be present even though there was very little explicit racism in Goody's certainly aggressive and hostile ranting and raving. On the contrary, the racism itself was regarded as having happened elsewhere: most notably in the ill-informed – possibly tendentious – comments and questions of the young and apparently naïve Danielle Lloyd, and reciprocally in the apparently knowing sniggering and largely tacit approval of Jo O'Meara. For instance, conversations between Goody, Lloyd and O'Meara contained references to how much they disliked Shetty using her hands to pick up and taste food; questions were asked

about whether 'they' 'all' ate like that (whether 'that' was India or China); Shetty's accent and mannerisms were parodied; comments were made about Shilpa Shetty not being able 'to speak English properly'; and Lloyd said that she 'wished' Shetty 'would fuck off home'.

Debates flared up about what viewers were witnessing here. To some, it was 'obvious' that it was a reflection of a latent racism. To others the racism was not 'latent', but rather the *apparent* racist overtones were merely the *unintended* results of Lloyd's ignorance of the fact that the sentiments she expressed were historically recognizable forms of racism. Similarly, suggestions were made that the white English girls were merely reacting to the characteristics of *one person* who annoyed them, and that it was unfair to say that therefore they were involved in racism (as anyone who has lived in close confinement with others for any length of time should be able to understand why people may come to find the idiosyncrasies of others intensely irritating). A different inflection – indeed, an inversion and displacement – of this interpretation was the suggestion that this was a clash of *cultural* differences that only looked like (or inevitably took the form of) a clash of *personal* differences. This, too, has several possible interpretations, of course. Either the conflict signified nothing more than that some people could not get along living in close quarters with another person. Or it hinged on the cultural difference. Was it *cultural* difference or just *personal* difference? Were those involved to be taken as representatives or products of different cultures? Did the white English girls grow to dislike the Indian girl *because* she was Indian? In other words, then, because they were English? Are racist responses *likely* in English girls who are forced into close contact with Indian girls? Is that something to do with 'English' culture in its relationship with 'Indian' culture?

But the questions multiply: Is this something to do with *gender*? Is this 'just what girls are like' under certain circumstances? Is this true of all girls? Or, is it, perhaps, just true of 'naïve' or 'ignorant' girls, girls who 'don't know any better' – in this case, young *working-class* girls. Is this about *class*? Is it, in other words, salient to consider that Goody, O'Meara and Lloyd all come from *working-class* backgrounds while Shetty comes from a *wealthy* family? Is this, then, class war (or resentment) playing itself out? A lot of what Goody said in her infamous tirade against Shetty seemed to be less racially or ethnically inflected and more in response to Goody's declared belief that Shetty believed herself to be 'better' than the rest of the occupants of the *Big Brother* house. Is this some kind of class-based resentment? Possibly. But mingled into her diatribes was a lot of evidence that Goody seemed to have a problem with Shetty's *beauty* and *success* too. So was it not also something peculiar to do with Goody's relationship to beauty and celebrity? And is her relationship to

beauty and celebrity something that is *personal* (or chance) or something that is more *widespread* ('cultural' or 'ideological')?

Psychologists and psychoanalysts may have a field day with the inversions, displacements and projections at play in such dialogues as those in which the multiple-award-winning Bollywood actress and beauty queen was referred to as a 'dog' and in which Goody apparently suggested that Shetty was famous only for being there on *Celebrity Big Brother*, with her. But even psychological (or psychologistic) interpretations cannot be disentangled from the social and cultural field. For, opinions, judgements, values, relations with and towards others, words and phrases used, expectations, hopes and aspirations, always seem *both* to come from *and* to point outside of and away from the person who expresses them – as if the person who expresses these things is therefore *also an expression of them*. An opinion may come out of someone's mouth, but mustn't it have been 'put there', in some sense? Words and even personal feelings always seem linked to histories and cultural contexts. So the question of *causes* will always be difficult to determine, especially perhaps in an example such as this, in which so many realms and registers appear to be involved: questions of culture, of difference, of ethnicity, of gender, of education, of economic class, of desire and, of course, of the media.

Similarly, the question of what *significance* all of this might have for anything else seems equally difficult to decide. Were these events in *Celebrity Big Brother* 'racist'? Were they evidence of one or another kind of resentment or jealousy? Was Shetty a victim or indeed a scapegoat in some sort of power or popularity contest? Was the drama in the house merely a result of claustrophobia-inducing cramped living conditions, or was it some kind of reflection of the differences between two or more cultures? And would those cultures be 'Indian' versus 'English', or upper class versus working class, or educated versus uneducated? Was the racism or bullying or victimization or ignorance or boredom or whatever an expression of something *latent*? And latent to whom? Latent to some random individuals, or to distinct social groups, or to particular social situations?

When so many factors are all *tangled up* together, when some seem 'obviously' personal and idiosyncratic, but when even the 'obviously' personal factors are *also* in a sense 'obviously' cultural; and when a few small sequences of words and actions on the television touch on so many issues and are disseminated to so many people around the world, how does one decide what is actually *present*, what is actually *happening*, *where* it is happening, what it all *means* and what its ultimate *significance* is? How do we make a decision? How do we decide?

Rather than rushing to a decision about all of this, or busying ourselves with proceeding to a conclusion, a *deconstruction* begins from acknowledging this uncertainty, this complexity, or what might be called this element of *undecidability*. For let's look at some of the things that are complex, uncertain, unclear and undecided in this picture. Firstly, an *event* seems to have happened. But *when* and *where*, exactly? It appears to have been both incremental, dispersed, ongoing and complex. It has many dimensions. It didn't take place at exactly one moment. It was spread out, across time and across space, in different conversations, between different people, first those inside and then many outside the house, indeed across the world. In fact, it is unclear *when and where* and indeed *whether it arrived or happened*: in different contexts it was given a different status; in some contexts it was barely noticed, while in others it led to major outrage. This is as much as to say that 'it' is not the same 'thing' across all of the places where it occurred. Indeed, 'it' was an event, rather than a 'thing'. It still is an event. It is something which 'happens', whenever people experience it, think about it, talk about it – whenever it is *reiterated*. For these reiterations are moments of what was once called 'performative interpretation': what the thing is deemed to be – what we think it is – is always the result of an interpretation, an interpretation that 'produces it' as such.

This is an unusual but important sort of argument. When we ask 'what happened' or 'what that was all about', we are already involved in coming to a decision about it. In other words, we are not necessarily *finding out about*, but (also) *producing an interpretation* of and *coming to a decision* about. The route that our thinking takes can lead to many different conclusions. Here, for example, we may decide: it was nothing; it was typical British racism; it was an unusual and isolated instance of a very untypical racism; it wasn't racism at all; it was racially inflected class resentment; it was gender-based beauty resentment; it was based on envy; it was a strange eruption of a kind of bullying normally only seen in schoolyards; it was sadism for the sheer enjoyment of excluding and victimizing someone; it was based on strictly personal differences; it was based on personal differences based on cultural differences; it was a *unique* admixture of all of these factors; it was a *typical* admixture of all of these factors; it was pure performance 'for the cameras', etc., etc.

Deconstruction thrives on this uncertainty or undecidability. How we come to decisions, the processes that we follow when coming to decisions, working things out, and constructing knowledge, the associations that we make, the steps we take, and so on: this is a primary concern of deconstruction.

## ... the Popular ...

But why should we share this concern? Why should we care about how decisions are made or how interpretations are reached? What difference does it make? The answer is in the questions: we should care about how decisions are made and interpretations are reached because these relate directly to how differences are made. How things are interpreted can make all the difference in the world. Whether the Jade Goody and Shilpa Shetty affaire was significant or insignificant, racist or not, a scandal or a shambles, and so on, is just one example. For, although it merely made some people laugh or become mildly irritated, it inspired others to protest violently about the protagonists, the show's producers, and even the UK itself.

One of the many things this suggests is that the so-called media 'realm' of certain aspects of popular culture is neither homogenous nor discrete, nor is it part of a unified or predictable 'circuit' of culture. Popular culture is not a realm distinct from other realms. It is, in fact, a complex matter of *articulation*: of texts, productions, interventions and utterances that can become connected with other so-called 'realms'. (A 'realm' is only *relatively* fixed, discrete, or stable: As the *Celebrity Big Brother* 'events' reveal, the putatively trivial 'realm' of reality TV can become involved and entangled with the so-called 'political realm'.) This possibility of articulation means that culture's relations and effects can behave in unpredictable ways, ways which make the very idea of a stable or predictable 'circuit of culture' somewhat doubtful. Ultimately, then, on the one hand, there is no reason why even supposedly trivial texts and moments of popular culture might not become articulated to (connected to, entangled with) (n)any other elements of the human world of culture, politics, society, history and economy, in complex and consequential ways. On the other hand, however, it also means that, no matter how much theorists theorize culture as a 'circuit', this circuit will never run smoothly or behave predictably. Indeed, as Stuart Hall once pointed out:

[I]t has always been impossible in the theoretical field of cultural studies – whether it is conceived either in terms of texts and contexts, of intertextuality, or of the historical formations in which cultural practices are lodged – to get anything like an adequate theoretical account of culture's relations and its effects. (Hall 1992: 285)

In other words, it is impossible to *know* cultural relations and effects with any certainty, in advance or in general. Every moment or event is an interpretive moment or event, whose status is up for grabs. So,

we cannot justifiably *write off* any manifestation of culture as insignificant. The interpretation of events is ethically and politically significant, through and through. (This premise is one of the reasons why cultural studies was among the first academic fields to focus on popular culture in a positive sense.)

## ... by cultural studies

So, popular culture cannot be written off as trivial or inconsequential. But nor can its consequences be predicted or generalized. Perhaps the most we can do is to study singular examples of 'texts and contexts, of intertextuality, or of the historical formations in which cultural practices are lodged', as Hall puts it. But the question remains, why should we bother?

In an influential essay, 'Cultural Studies and Its Theoretical Legacies', Stuart Hall insists that cultural studies is an intellectual and academic practice that is dominated by a strong 'will to connect' (1992: 278). For Hall, this 'will to connect' means that by definition cultural studies 'tries to make a difference in the institutional world in which it is located' (1992: 285). Accordingly – and despite the embarrassing vagueness of the name 'cultural studies' (a source of embarrassment that we will return to in Chapter 7) – this is a definition which means that cultural studies *cannot* simply be just 'whatever people [choose to] do' (1992: 278). Indeed, says Hall:

It can't be just any old thing which chooses to march under a particular banner. It is a serious enterprise, or project, and that is inscribed in what is sometimes called the 'political' aspect of cultural studies. Not that there's one politics already inscribed in it. But there is something *at stake* in cultural studies, in a way that I think, and hope, is not exactly true of many other very important intellectual and critical practices. (Hall 1992: 278)

This whole book is informed by this argument. As will be argued in the conclusion (Chapter 8), cultural studies' efforts to 'make a difference' in the world have long hinged on offering reinterpretations and critiques of existing interpretations. Ironically, though, despite Hall's influential characterization of cultural studies as a serious, motivated, politicized, interventional project, its focus on such areas as popular culture has regularly led to it having been (mis)construed and (mis)represented as being precisely the opposite of this: namely, as 'just any old thing', as 'whatever people [choose to] do': as a vague, wishy-washy, 'Mickey Mouse' subject (Young 1999: 5). Doubtless, part of the reason why

cultural studies has been given such a bad name is because it had already been given such a bad name. For what could *possibly* sound more vague and unfocused than 'cultural studies'? How *naff* is that for a name? And this name, although merely denoting a perfectly reasonable (albeit potentially limitless) field of study, because of its vagueness, carries connotations that actively help the uninformed to surmise that if cultural studies doesn't have an instantly specifiable or clearly delimitable *object* (as in, definable and delimitable field of study), then it must be that it doesn't have a properly specifiable or delimitable object (as in *point*). But the plurality and openness of 'culture' as a field of study does not mean that *cultural studies* – as a named institutional entity – 'can be simply pluralist', points out Hall:

Yes, it refuses to be a master discourse or meta-discourse of any kind. Yes, it is a project that is always open to that which it doesn't yet know, to that which it can't yet name. But it does have some will to connect; it does have some stake in the choices it makes. It does matter whether cultural studies is this or that. (Hall 1992: 278)

And *what it necessarily is*, for Hall – constitutively, always already – despite being given a bad name twice over (once, tragically, by its founders and second, farcically, by its critics) – or despite all its wishy-washy connotations – is something of a wolf in sheep's clothing: claiming only to be *studies*, cultural studies sought primarily to *intervene*, ethically and politically, in the discourses of other disciplines and institutions – as a kind of ethico-political 'corrective'. In Hall's account, cultural studies was formed in 'a discursive formation, in Foucault's sense' (Hall, Morley and Chen 1996: 263), emerging within the 'milieu' of the New Left in the UK in the 1960s and 1970s (Rojek 2003: 23). It was a university institution that was explicitly ethically and politically motivated: open to the new and to the other (open to alterity), and it was intent on pushing exclusionary limits, borders, conventions, boundaries, orientations, hierarchies, and so on. In short, as Hall makes clear: cultural studies was intent on *intervening*, on *altering*. It was never 'merely academic', either in the literal or the pejorative sense of this term. Rather, to employ one of Derrida's definitions of deconstruction that will return regularly throughout this book: although it was located within the university institution, cultural studies has always been, by definition, '*an institutional practice for which . . . the institution remains a problem*' (Derrida 2002: 53). Thus, for cultural studies as for deconstruction, 'institution' is a central and defining problematic.

For *institutions* are influential. By 'institution' what is meant are both *institutions themselves* and *acts of institution* (the instituting of

new sites, practices and, well, institutions). As the title of a book by Sam Weber (1987) puts it clearly, there is a strong, reciprocal relationship between *Institution and Interpretation*. Interpretations influence institutions, and institutions determine interpretations. And these relationships have wider social, cultural and political effects. This is precisely why Chapter 1 of this book focuses exclusively on one 'little' text: the management and self-help book, *Who Moved My Cheese?* For this apparently simple little text is one that has been globally popular for some time now, and popular among all kinds of significant institutions. *Who Moved My Cheese?* has testimonials on its pages from businesses and universities, from television companies and the military, and more. It is reputedly read in many countries, including Japan and America, in family homes, by parents to their children, as a bedtime story. Many major companies have held many major conferences celebrating and exploring the 'usefulness' of *Who Moved My Cheese?* So, although it is only a 'simple', 'little' text, it is arguably a highly significant text of popular culture. Chapter 1, the first of four chapters making up Part I, is, then, a different sort of exploration of the 'usefulness' of a different sort of popular cultural text. Chapter 1 argues – through a close reading of *Who Moved My Cheese?* – that it is primarily an *ideological* text, which seeks to make its readers passive, inert, unthinking, and accepting of their own exploitation. At the same time as this, the chapter works as a clear introduction to deconstructive styles of reading, as it demonstrates that this text clearly says what it does not want us to know that it says: *you are worthless rodents and deserve nothing more than subsistence, if you are lucky*. All that is required in order to be able to see this is an *active* reading process, rather than the 'interpretive passivity' that the book's structure tries to foist upon us.

The theme of *active reading* versus interpretive passivity (or 'interpassivity') is picked up again in Chapter 2. This chapter moves from the theme of *self* (self-help), that dominated Chapter 1, to the (cultural studies) question of a relationship to *you* (to something or someone *other*). The chapter pursues this, first by examining the pop song, 'Writing to Reach You', by the band Travis. This reading serves several purposes. Firstly, of course, it clarifies some key dimensions of deconstruction, and shows the way that ideas and issues that Jacques Derrida developed in his readings of 'complex' philosophical texts can be seen to be at work in the supposedly 'simple' texts of popular culture. Thus, the chapter reveals the complex *intertextuality* of popular cultural texts, cultural productions and cultural practices. At the same time as this, and by way of a reading of this song (and some closely related cultural texts), the chapter explores the significance of the palpable *anxiety* that is present within the lyrics of the song. This anxiety – 'I'm writing to reach you

now but I might never reach you' – can easily be related to the contemporary 'postmodern' condition in numerous ways (and particularly to the anxieties that are characteristic – even definitive – of cultural studies).

Chapter 3 turns to the common contemporary theme of *identity*. Because considerations of identity are so current (everyone now 'knows' that 'identity is constructed'), the chapter seeks to suggest some of the myriad potential ways that popular culture *supplements* our identities. It does so, initially, through an opening consideration of one popular cultural example: the song 'JCB Song' by the band Nizlopi. What is particularly pertinent here is the way that this example instantly leads us away to a prior example: the iconic and exemplary figure of Bruce Lee. What is important about Bruce Lee in this context is the way in which Bruce Lee as a source of identification and identity formation opens up onto questions of *cultural* identity. These are terms that we use all the time – we can speak of 'my identity', a culture's 'identity', and so on; but what does it mean? The chapter traces the complex cultural ramifications of the intervention of Bruce Lee, specifically the implications of subjective identification with Bruce Lee. It suggests that popular culture – however 'mediated', 'simulated' or indeed even 'fake' – could be said to deconstruct traditional historical forms and formations of culture *itself*.

So, Chapter 3 suggests that the supposedly fake can deconstruct and reconstruct reality. Chapter 4 clarifies the ways that certain fictions have structured our notions of what is real, but this time in the political 'realm'. This chapter deconstructs popular conceptions of politics and of the political. It examines both popular cultural forms of political action (from popular forms of protest to activities like culture jamming, from direct action to revolutionary theories) and intellectual theorizations of politics (from Marxism to Neoliberalism). The chapter considers several sorts of political events and different forms of political action, and characterizes the dominant notions of *what* cultural and political 'cause and effect' *are*. It does so first in a section which explores what the chapter calls 'street-fetishism'. It argues, through reading 'concrete' notions of street and grass-roots politics, that 'the street' is in fact a *fetish concept* of politics. For in political and politicized discourse, 'the material' is taken to be the 'hard stuff' of 'reality'. So, talking about it seems *real*. But it is merely a *trope* (an image or metaphor that structures one's thinking and orientations).

Using so-called 'concrete examples' from both political action (street protests, first of all) and the arguments of key thinkers of cultural studies, the argument here is that the perceived political need to appear to 'connect' with the 'concrete reality' exemplified by the street is the dominant injunction and fetish concept of politicized intellectual discourse. The chapter argues that 'the street' is the 'royal road' to

the traditional political consciousness. This leads into the second section, which deconstructs the hold of the 'metaphysical' image of politics over political discourse: the street appears as (if) 'presence', 'life', 'activity'. But, the chapter suggests, the street is also to be thought of as an institution of mediation, distance, deferral, absence, etc. So the chapter concludes by (so to speak) crossing to the other side of the street and focusing on the notion of *articulation* – the necessity, inevitability and importance of dis/connection, de/linking, de- and reconstructing. Along the way, the chapter focuses on the status of the historically hugely important political signifier, 'class', and the deconstruction of this category by certain deconstructive political theorists. It concludes with some suggestions for a deconstructed, reconstructed and deconstructive political strategy that could be available to everyone – regardless of class or proximity to the street.

Of course, such suggestions will not be welcomed by all. This is not least because deconstructive approaches to culture and politics have themselves sometimes been deemed by some commentators to be part of the last gasp of the legacy of the radical countercultural movements of the 1950s and 1960s. Part II of *Deconstructing Popular Culture* therefore begins with Chapter 5's examination of the conceptual underpinnings of popular countercultural movements, as well as those of the key criticisms of such movements. The chapter moves into a sustained consideration of the criticisms that the hugely popular cultural theorist Slavoj Žižek makes of 'counterculture' and, reciprocally, of the cultural studies approaches that have championed countercultural movements. So, beginning from a mainstream popular cultural text, the chapter reveals the notion of counterculture to be an unstable one, and goes on to examine the main brands of popular countercultural thinking. It examines the familiar challenge (regularly reiterated by thinkers on both the traditional Left and the Right) that both cultural and countercultural movements can be understood as being the bastard offspring and ideological affiliates of capitalism. This kind of thinking about popular cultural movements is neither new nor unique, but it has, as just mentioned, been given voice most recently by the anti-cultural studies philosopher, Slavoj Žižek, who has developed a sustained critique of many orientations and activities: popular culture, counterculture, deconstruction and cultural studies included. Accordingly, because Žižek is at times the most vociferous contemporary critic of the academic study of popular culture, the remainder of Chapter 5, and Chapter 6, are devoted to elaborating and deconstructing Žižek's critiques of popular culture, counterculture, cultural studies and, indeed, deconstruction.

In other words, Part II begins by deconstructing the arguments of those who would object to the importance and consequentiality of

popular culture and, indeed, of deconstructing popular culture. But is that all there is to it? In light of what has been argued about popular culture, deconstruction and cultural studies, the second half of Part II turns to reflect on the popular subjects of deconstruction and cultural studies themselves. For, given their growth and institutionalization, does deconstruction need deconstructing; does cultural studies? What is to be made of their very popularity? How do they relate to popular culture; are they related to popular fashion, or commodification? These latter questions are very regularly posed to both deconstruction and cultural studies. What is more, they are also posed to cultural studies by those associated with deconstruction and to deconstruction by those associated with cultural studies. So, the final chapters engage with and provide a response to these questions. They assess the status and significance of the 'unpopular popularity' of deconstruction and cultural studies.

These two final chapters reiterate why and how Derridean deconstruction and cultural studies have sought to institute responsible intellectual and ethico-political engagement with the popular and the unpopular. They argue that, because of their destabilizing efforts, hostility and resistance to deconstruction and cultural studies was always in a sense *inevitable*, 'pre-programmed', and to be anticipated. Yet, they ask, what is to be made of deconstruction's own institutionalization if, as Derrida put it, deconstruction 'instigates the subversion of every kingdom, which makes it obviously threatening and infallibly dreaded by everything within us that desires a kingdom' (1974: 22)? Is there a kingdom or reign of deconstruction? Might the name and the form of the reign of deconstruction be cultural studies? In a sense, Chapter 8 proposes that this might indeed be the case. Of course, just as Stuart Hall claims to 'have almost as many problems with "popular" as I do with "culture"', and that 'when you put the two terms together the difficulties can be pretty horrendous', so, when you try to put 'cultural studies' and 'deconstruction' together, the difficulties can be equally – if not more – horrendous. Nevertheless, the final chapter offers an analysis, assessment, and series of suggestions for making precisely such a hybrid not only possible but necessary – both for cultural studies and for deconstruction. For popular culture may perhaps be a 'field' that is potentially limitless, unbounded, or immensely difficult to circumscribe and define (although this is not *quite* the case – for reasons that are clarified or reiterated in the Afterword). But our relationship to it should perhaps not be open-ended or aimless. Our relationship to it should, I argue, for ethical and political reasons, be one of deconstructing popular culture.

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