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1
Communicating Investment: Cultural Studies, Politics and Affect

Narratives matter and the kinds of stories we tell ourselves about cultural studies, about how it has or has not passed an epistemological, ethical or political threshold which differentiates it from its disciplinary forebears, will influence how we envisage its future trajectories and seek to contribute to their development. (Bennett, 1998: 42)

Introduction

Over the past decade, publishers' catalogues have continued to showcase an apparently ceaseless supply of introductory readers, taxonomies and evaluations of cultural studies. Writing this book I have often worried about the need to add yet another title to this by now surely satiated field. My anxieties only heightened recently when two respected mentors remarked (in a cultural studies conference plenary no less): 'Nothing is more boring than when cultural studies talks about itself'.[1] This was hardly the most encouraging thing to hear when finishing a manuscript, particularly when the book itself arises out of concern that something fundamental has been missing from existing accounts of cultural studies. I describe this 'something' as cultural studies' particular investment and commitment to scholarly practice, its sense of vocation, which is communicated through a contagious 'affect' in the forms of address adopted by its key figures. This investment in what Bruce Robbins (1993) calls a 'secular vocation' must be acknowledged if cultural studies is to resolve its disciplinary as well as institutional 'bashfulness' (Bennett, 1998: 8). By taking the university as the principal site of cultural studies' modest political ambitions, this book argues that one of the field's key achievements has been to question the conventions of traditional academic discourse, reworking some of its expectations and

functions to keep step with contemporary events. In doing so, I will suggest, cultural studies has widened the participants for scholarly debate, making the academic vocation a more attractive and likely prospect for different kinds of people.

My approach does not seek to imply any inadequacy on the part of those who have provided the important theoretical and epistemological footing for cultural studies' emergence. It merely admits that the focus on historical content and disciplinary method has had particular consequences. The most significant of these has been to postpone discussion of the wider ethical and political dimensions of cultural studies' practice – dimensions which will be crucial to the field's capacity to continue its project within markedly different institutional conditions than those of its beginnings.[2] Combined with the publishing and administrative expectations of professional academic life, the various occupational pressures of the contemporary university environment work against efforts to describe, let alone facilitate, the collegial pleasures likely to ensure generational succession. Focusing on the content of its practice – on genealogy, on epistemology – cultural studies has paid substantially less attention to this ontological dimension accompanying its innovations in practice. Such an account has perhaps been an unaffordable luxury for a relatively new discipline. But the moment might now be right to attempt this different kind of inventory, if only because with the passing of time, things that may have seemed implicit and obvious may be increasingly difficult to recall and keep central.

Tony Bennett summarises a key aspect of my concerns in this book when he writes:

> Most of the accounts of cultural studies that are so far available to us are 'insider' accounts written from within its framework of shared assumptions. Better, they are accounts which have helped forge and articulate those shared assumptions and to organise a 'we' whose members recognise the history of cultural studies as their own – the history of their trials and tribulations, setbacks and advances. As accounts which have thus been concerned to construct a particular sense of being 'in the true' that characterises and distinguishes the cultural studies enterprise, they have all (necessarily) been written from within that truth in the very process of forming it. (Bennett, 1998: 43)

This passage offers a formulation that I recognise even if age precludes my interpellation as part of the 'we' Bennett identifies. While for his

purposes it serves a positioning function for subsequent arguments regarding institutional and disciplinary maturity, I find the passage useful for other reasons. In its attention to the default 'we' of cultural studies, Bennett indicates the difficulty for younger generations of emerging scholars to see the radical potential of something that has never been anything other than a university course, and an established discipline in some contexts. As I have argued in further detail elsewhere:

> For researchers inheriting cultural studies' legacies today, there has never been a time *before* radical professionalism, *before* the strategic thinking required by institutional politics, a time when one might *not* have spent most of their energy navigating funding bodies. What's more, many recent graduates have been politicised *by* their exposure to academic theory, which is to say that for the present generation there has never been a time 'before' or 'after' theory. (Gregg, 2006)

A growing number of cultural studies practitioners neither witnessed nor participated in the formative debates about cultural studies mentioned by Bennett. Whatever significance one might accord the field's 'project' (Grossberg, 2004a) demands to be repositioned for a generation whose 'framework of shared assumptions' instead include an all-pervasive neoliberal culture, not to mention a landscape ritually described in terms of 'terror'. As leading figures in cultural studies' initial mobilisation inevitably move away from the spotlight, *Cultural Studies' Affective Voices* is written with all the biases and assumptions of this next generation. Rather than renouncing the field's dominant traditions, however, it attempts to offer an overdue assessment of the continued hope to be drawn from them, as well as the university as the site of our ongoing investment as scholars.

In the past, academic writing tended to avoid conscious displays of affect or emotion. As Teresa Brennan has written, the faculty of discernment involves a process 'whereby affects pass from the state of sensory registration to a state of cognitive or intelligent reflection' (2004: 120). Importantly, however, Brennan also argues that the process of reflection is not itself without affect, 'just that the affect is other than the affect that is being reflected upon' (ibid.). In Brennan's view, the fact that 'reason and passion or affect and cognition keep reappearing as binaries' is evidence that scholarship aspires for 'a real and necessary distinction between the ego and the faculty of discernment, between the passions and the "other I" who reflects on them' (ibid.).

Brennan's scientific perspective is an important complement to recent debates within media and cultural studies focusing on affect and emotion. Yet her writing does not dwell on the history within institutions of knowledge and learning which has tended to associate *particular kinds of people* with affect and unreason. It is in this sense that I find affect's relationship to cultural studies' political ambitions well worth considering.

In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Michel de Certeau (1984) recognises that the 'scriptural economy' operating in bourgeois institutions like the university has been central to the process whereby some voices are granted more authority than others. De Certeau's account of the rise of the bourgeoisie attributes their great success to the decision to treat language as 'a disorderly nature that has to be cultivated':

> The mastery of language guarantees and isolates a new power, a "bourgeois" power, that of making history and fabricating languages. This power, which is essentially scriptural… defines the code governing socio-economic promotion and dominates, regulates, or selects according to its norms all those who do not possess this mastery of language. (de Certeau, 1984: 138–9)

Drawing out the relationship between language, authority and class, de Certeau demonstrates how certain voices have been able to be dismissed by governing powers for the 'lack of mastery' betrayed in their speech. This 'code of promotion and regulation' has been central to securing the dominance of white, middle class, male voices in key institutions over time – it is no coincidence that women's maternal capabilities were successfully articulated to the realm of hysteria and emotion. As Dale Spender forcefully argues, the 'wholesale denial of education to women' in the early days of the university forced women 'to prove that they were capable of being educated, and that they were "fit" candidates for university' (1995: 163). In today's university context, then, cultural studies is part of a wider reaction to the class and gender privileges that have been involved in knowledge production, evaluation and dissemination in the past. Its commitment to self-reflexive scholarly practice shows an awareness of the historical conditions lending certain kinds of voices the most authentic claim to truth. Cultural studies attempts to democratise the strict rules of engagement that have typically characterised the university – rules which have often sought to tame the unwieldy or dangerous potential inherent within a speaking subject. In doing so, it often privileges the perspectives of those who have suffered

as a result of the scriptural economy of the past; particularly the voices of women, racial minorities and the poor. In this way, as bell hooks argues, cultural studies 'can serve as an intervention, making a space for forms of intellectual discourse to emerge that have not been traditionally welcomed in the academy' (hooks, 1990: 125).

The mobilising defence of cultural studies hooks offers indicates that maintaining a representative community of scholars requires different forms of academic subjectivity and performance than those that have been associated with scholarly discourse in the past. To appreciate cultural studies' impact does not require a wholesale abdication of scholarly ideals or the quest for verifiable knowledge, as its most stringent critics tend to claim. What it does demand is a thorough reckoning with the manner in which knowledge has been and continues to be expressed – and as such, assessed – within culturally specific terms (Bourdieu et al., 1994; Bourdieu, 1988). Subsequent chapters of this book document the ways cultural studies has questioned the habitual judgements and value-laden frameworks that have determined epistemological worth in the humanities; how it has highlighted the biases of class, race, gender and location which have limited established hermeneutics. This is part of a process Lawrence Grossberg describes as the attempt to 'reclaim' intellectual authority: 'The fact that authority is socially constructed, that all knowledge is historically implicated with systems of power, does not mean that all authority can or should be rejected, or that all systems of power are equally condemnable' (1997a: 267).

As an argument for the significance of a politics aimed at discursive conventions, this book follows a tradition of thought which refuses the distinction between political theory and practice. Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze discuss the role of the intellectual in accordance with this 'new relationship between theory and practice' where 'theory does not express, translate, or serve to apply practice: it is practice' (1977: 205–7).[3] In my attention to voice, I am also identifying with a history of feminist writing which tests and reworks the forms of speech typically accepted as scholarly, which is to say, deserving of academic legitimacy.

In *The Pirate's Fiancée*, Meaghan Morris establishes a crucial difference between an uncomplicated deployment of subjectivity in scholarly discourse and the task of producing a speaking position as 'a strategy of reference' (1988a: 7). This distinction has been a critical step in overturning prevailing assumptions that the use of the first person in academic work is ideologically and analytically suspect. Some years later, Elspeth Probyn's *Sexing the Self* (1993) interrogated the same presumption, arguing that theorised 'selves' bring situated

and conjunctural insights to cultural studies. Both writers appreciate that generic choices have better or worse consequences. With disciplinary training, a performative voice can be used purposefully in particular contexts for concerted effects. My further suggestion, stemming from this crucial foundation, is that a collegially and politically important function arises in cultural studies' distinctive combination of an affective address and critical rigour. The new voices cultural studies brings to the academy create the possibility of a mobilising and contagious discourse, one which sustains existing intellectual peers but also spreads the insights of scholarly work to new audiences.

Investing in a vocation: Scholarly life and its affects

The strength of popular perceptions associating scholarly endeavour with notions of objectivity, emotional detachment and rational thought have made discussion of affect's place in the academy difficult. Yet given the amount of solitary dedication scholars often require to produce their work, it is hardly accurate to suggest that academics lack passion for their investigative concerns. As I will take some length to argue, it is a *consciously* partisan approach that has established new priorities for intellectual inquiry in emerging fields like cultural studies.

In common parlance, affect is often aligned with charisma and emotion, and it is for this reason that affect can be viewed as having dangerous potential: it leaves individual scholars subject to the influence of compelling ideas or charismatic personalities. As Brian Massumi has observed, this confusion over affect's etymology is largely the result of a reluctance to discuss affect with any great specificity, which is also to say in the plural (Massumi, 1996; see also Probyn, 2005). If it is broadly acknowledged that there are positive, negative, even innate forms of affect which constitute our normal psychic functioning – which simply constitute the very matter of being and existing – then the relative hysteria surrounding its function in academic practice suggests a critical blindness requiring explanation. Scholarly life is full of visceral experiences: the hopeful trajectories a writer's voice can encourage as you read their work, the stimulus and provocation of peers, the confidence a mentor can inspire in a student are just some of the energies which help sustain what would otherwise seem a solitary vocation. Think too of the fear and adrenaline that come with presenting work in public, the ferocity with which disciplinary ideologues stake out their turf, the indignant soliloquies of aging colleagues faced with one more bureaucratic imposition or the consuming doubt that can descend on even the most

gifted writers. The immense range of affective scenarios in academia is formidable.

To the extent that these rich and vital dimensions of scholarly life are rarely narrated or publicly acknowledged, however, academics continue to fight stereotypes of isolationism, leading to inaccurate clichés about university life. The point of recognising the affective nature of scholarly practice is to highlight the fundamentally social qualities it involves. As I will also suggest, it is to signal the importance of collegiality and community in assisting the difficult choice which is to make a living from thinking seriously and differently. Paying notice to the immediate levels of scholarly production and performance can help to understand the function it continues to serve for individual scholars and for colleagues collectively.

Too often the affective dimensions of scholarly life are downplayed, even though they are central to securing professional solidarity and regeneration. Introducing a mode of analysis that distinguishes the 'voice' of individual intellectuals, I seek to establish a way of accessing the affective relationships that develop in the pursuit of knowledge, particularly how a writer's investment in their subject often transmits to the page and can spread to readers of their work. The writers engaged with here – Richard Hoggart, Stuart Hall, Larry Grossberg, Andrew Ross and Meaghan Morris – each develop an affective address that has been contagious and regenerative for cultural studies. There's a distinct manner in the tone of each of these writers, a certain inflection to their voice, which lends urgency to the vocation. In quite different ways, these writers' characteristic forms of intervention communicate investment and involvement. Their writing relates the significance of issues forming cultural studies' critical agenda and mobilises textual strategies that make what's dear to the writer a concern for the reader too. While my selection may appear to be an arbitrary group of scholars given cultural studies' already rich history, I argue the mode of intervention each of these writers adopts is a crucial commentary on existing hermeneutics. How they write is symptomatic of what they attempt to convey, and each chapter offers a reading of the particular 'voice' that is used to do so.

I use voice in a particular sense here. Firstly, it refers to the distinct and unique signature, the mode of address that identifies their intervention. But also, the idea of voice is an attempt to distance my readings from any simple equation with autobiographical subjectivity or personality. The writerly voice employed fits the wider message and political objectives of the author's work; their *style* is a generic choice

reflecting the *substance* of the message. This is an optimistic form of writing. It needs to believe it can have an effect. It aspires to touch the reader with words, questioning the institutional barriers which prevent the spreading of ideas. What is important about this, and why affect is an essential element of scholarly practice, is that such a discourse catalyses colleagues. It is crucial to professional regeneration.

Morris herself suggests that often as academics 'we ask of a discourse that has manifestly just inspired and strengthened people, "Yes, but what *else* can it do?"' (1993a: 41). It's a cogent observation, pertinent for those concerned with the historically fraught relationship between academic work and an 'outside' world which it might seek to influence. The concept of investment, or what might be called 'scholarly affect', is one response to Morris's suspicion 'that a cultural politics interested in influencing the future will benefit greatly from understanding better than in the past what it is that such a discourse – in inspiring and strengthening its audience – actually does, (ibid.).

It is precisely this function of strengthening and catalysing others that I suggest warrants recognition as a situated form of politics, as a 'specific' intellectual practice in Foucault's sense (Foucault, 1980). Looking at figures in cultural studies who fulfil this role and use it to create new spaces for speaking and studying culture in the academy, I argue that affective voices encourage solidarity and continuity in scholarly work. Creating links between a past, present and future community of writers and thinkers, scholarly affect emphasises the importance of imaginative, rousing writing in a sometimes technocratic world.

Affective contagion

Anna Gibbs has been quick to notice the trend that 'in cultural studies, "affect" seems to be emerging as a key term in the wake of expressed feminist desires to "think through the body"' (Gibbs, 2002: 335). While in other disciplines affect might be associated with notions of charisma, ideology or irrationality, affect's critical uses are increasingly recognised in cultural studies. But 'what is meant by the "emotions" in other disciplines and by "affect" in cultural studies is somewhat variable' (ibid.). Clarifying these alternatives, Gibbs offers a reading of the psychologist Silvan Tomkins to describe his model of affect which responds to innate biological drives. This is an understanding of affect as 'the primary human motivational system, amplifying the drives and lending them urgency' (2002: 337). Gibbs's reading is therefore a contrast to dominant understandings of affect in cultural studies, which she claims retain 'a certain distance from affect in its biological sense' (2002: 335). Moving

away from the textual emphasis of these approaches, Gibbs engages in a cross-disciplinary project with clinical and scientific theories, to rethink 'the role of innate or categorical affect in human communication' (2002: 335).

I mention these different understandings of affect to pay heed to the term's specific uses (see also Gregg, 2005). My notion of 'scholarly affect' is slightly different again. Just as Gibbs uses Tomkins's concept of 'affective contagion' to describe relations between visual media and their audiences, and the communicative properties of the human face (Gibbs, 2001) I also seek to concentrate on the contagiousness of affects, but through the medium of the text.

Teresa Brennan (2004) has argued that the transmission of affect has yet to be adequately theorised, because Western modes of perception are particularly challenged by the idea that we may not be in control of our feelings, moods and actions as individuals. She seeks to explain this process, which 'is social in origin but biological and physical in effect' (2004: 3). Brennan's psychological and somatic focus differs from the mainly visual stimuli of Gibbs's analysis. The acts of reading and comprehension I am interested in operate at a different level of cognitive processing again: reading is a longer feedback system relying on culturally specific literacies and hence a greater lag in response is likely. Furthermore, as critics of reader-response theory readily testify, the many factors conditioning the act of interpretation hardly guarantee a predictable response from every reader. Nonetheless, there is still a biological dimension to the responses a text can generate. Affect can exist within the text itself, and arise from the page as it is read (Young, 2005). This potential for affects to be generated, disseminated and caught through a *textual* voice, is what the following chapters seek to instantiate.

To some, this may sound like an elaborately disguised return to the Author, in the critique of which a number of poststructuralist writers have been prominent. Barthes writes in his essay announcing 'The Death of the Author' that too often 'the *explanation* of a work' has been 'sought in the man or woman who produced it, as if it were always in the end, through the more or less transparent allegory of the fiction, the voice of a single person, the *author* 'confiding' in us' (Barthes, 1977: 143). Barthes's essay certainly sounded the end of any innocent recourse to the idea of authorial intention, particularly when he wrote passages attesting that writing begins when 'the voice loses its origin' – this is the moment when 'the author enters into his own death' (1977: 142). Whether or not the author's identity is assumed to reside in the text, I am suggesting there are still effects to be gleaned from the voice he or

she employs. Even the most anti-subjective of critics, Gilles Deleuze, places faith in the writer's 'clinical' function (1997) of diagnosing the troubled reality of the present:

> Whether through words, colors, sounds, or stone, art is the language of sensations. Art does not have opinions. Art undoes the triple organization of perceptions, affections, and opinions in order to substitute a monument composed of percepts, affects, and blocs of sensations that take the place of language. The writer uses words, but by creating a syntax that makes them pass into sensation that makes the standard language stammer, tremble, cry, or even sing: this is the style, the "tone," the language of sensations, or the foreign language within language that summons forth a people to come, "Oh, people of old Catawba," "Oh, people of Yoknapatawpha." The writer twists language, makes it vibrate, seizes hold of it, and rends it in order to wrest the percept from perceptions, the affect from affections, the sensation from opinion – in view, one hopes, of that still-missing people. (Deleuze and Guattari 1994: 176)

Twisting the language of academic speech, rescuing the affect that has been stripped of its prose, the cultural studies writers described here create a syntax to capture the sensuous detail of the subjects they study. As we will see, their writing puts claims upon a more invigorating future scholarship 'to come'.

Affective criticism: Hearing the extratextual

The grain of the voice

When I say 'textual voice', the specific sense I have in mind is closest to Barthes's idea of 'the grain of the voice' in his essay of the same name. Barthes formulated this mode of criticism in response to his perception that the long-playing (LP) record brought new ways of listening to musical performances. In his view, the increased number of songs the LP demanded of the singer prolonged the listening experience, but in doing so discounted sensitivity to the 'grain' of the voice. Barthes feared the consequence of this development would be that our means of listening to and engaging with cultural products would become implicated in the material dictates of the capitalism system. Capitalism 'condemned' criticism to the 'adjective', obscuring the individuality and uniqueness of a voice (1977: 181).

The approach to listening Barthes developed was directed not to 'the tyranny of meaning' which he claimed had colonised the genre of music criticism but one which could produce an admittedly 'impossible account of an individual thrill' experienced when listening to certain performers (1977: 181–2). This 'climactic pleasure', according to Barthes, would be an appreciation of 'the *diction* of the language' taking into account the tone, the pitch, the overall 'feel' of a performer's persona (1997: 182–3). This listening disposition goes against 'everything which it is customary to talk about – the matter of acknowledged tastes, of fashions, of critical commentaries'. It rails against preconceived ideas of what '*can be* said: what is said about it, predicatively, by Institution, Criticism, Opinion' (1997: 185). It asks that conventional parameters of critical judgment be suspended to enact an '*encounter between a language and a voice*' (1977: 181–2).

For Barthes, this encounter between language and voice is necessary in order to leave oneself open to the possibility of *jouissance*: the definitive sensation of overwhelming affect. For my purposes here, I argue that the close reading conditions required of scholarly practice summon a similar degree of attention to the diction of a writer's language: the particular timbre and cadence of a writer's voice has the capacity to affect a reader in a number of ways. One need only think of Derrida's playful theatrics or Bourdieu's multitudinous clauses to follow Barthes's idea that a voice is like a signature in its uniqueness. But what I am suggesting is that certain voices, particularly when they address issues about which we are also passionate, are capable of affecting us in ways that stimulate, arouse and thrill. In this way reading can be quite a physical and moving experience: it can summon delight, exhilaration or inspiration.

Of course, not all writers provoke the same affective response in all people, nor are the responses themselves necessarily positive ones. But when they are, such an encounter between language and voice can make scholarly work seem important and worthwhile. It can make the momentum of the work infectious. In this sense affect differs from charisma because its consequences are neither mindless nor fatalistic.[4] The grain of the voice has the effect of mobilising a reader, contributing to further acts of scholarship. Its affective dimension, once enjoyed, is sublimated to critical ends.

The further point to be taken from Barthes's paradigm is that the voices he identifies are engaged in exercises that pass beyond a mere adoption of 'style', but demonstrate 'a practical reflection (if one may put it like that) on the language' used (1977: 186). At the time of his writing,

Barthes was concerned that the French were no longer using their language in a characteristic way, that is, 'as a space of pleasure, of thrill, a site where language works *for nothing*, that is, in perversion' (1977: 187). My similar concern in this book is with the modes of criticism and performance accompanying academic writing. I question whether the institutional strength of multinational scholarly publishing might be leading to a proliferation in publishing avenues at the expense of any diversity in discursive address.

As Morris and Muecke (1995) argue, in the inaugural editorial of their journal, *UTS Review*, the safely reproducible scholarly voices dominating the critical landscape risk the likelihood of experimental forms of writing and research in the future. And as the university becomes increasingly managed by corporate models of accountability, there are fewer chances to use language for unprofitable, felicitous purposes. I share Barthes's interest in a criticism that can resist the stultifying effects of mass commercialisation, institutionalisation and utility. I too want to draw out 'the body in the voice as it sings, the hand as it writes, the limb as it performs' (1977: 188). If this new scheme of evaluation is personal and individual in nature, this is not to say that it is 'subjective' in the sense one usually defines it. As Barthes elaborates: 'it is not the psychological "subject" in me who is listening; the climactic pleasure hoped for is not going to reinforce – to express – that subject but, on the contrary, to lose it' (1977: 188).

The mimetic double

Another productive guide in my attempt to access the extratextual properties of cultural studies writing is film theorist Laleen Jayamanne. In a move that resembles Barthes's focus on voice, Jayamanne describes criticism as the matter of reading and relating a text's 'enunciative strategies' (2001: 15). A method informed by early moves in feminist theory,[5] Jayamanne's is an attempt to shake up the 'critical assumptions solidly in place' *before* one encounters a text (ibid.). Writing from within the field of film studies, Jayamanne finds that the strength of preconceptions often brought to viewing means 'no film can ever shift them' (ibid.). Here the habitual methods of the supposedly 'critical' practices brought to an object prevent it from making an impact to change received modes of thinking. To counter this trend, Jayamanne's strategy is to individualise the textual address, what she calls (again echoing Barthes) the 'activation of an encounter' (2001: xi). Suspending one's preconceptions for the duration of the encounter activates a sensitivity to the individual properties of a film – how the film immediately

grabs you as a viewer, regardless of theoretical fashion. This form of viewing is 'a means of entering the object, though not necessarily through the door marked "Enter"' (ibid.).

Jayamanne's approach stems from her dissatisfaction with a particular mode of cultural studies criticism that reads film in terms of its narrative structure, and thus how it addresses pre-established investigative interests (class, race or gender, for instance). In her view, these methods are too narrow and presumptive. They leave little possibility for a film to be considered in its own terms: the particular way it appears and unfolds, how it concerns itself with the story it tells. In effect, approaches concentrating on narrative discount the very features which distinguish film as a medium. Jayamanne's suggested alternative is to provide for the object of analysis a 'mimetic double', that is, a critical response appropriate to the gestures advanced in the text. The mimetic double begins as a response to a stimulus (a tracing of the text) but comes into its own as a work of criticism through the idiosyncrasy of the gestures it notices:

> If the description does not move, then criticism is no more than a dull copy or repetition of the object. The kind of descriptive act required cannot be determined before the encounter with a particular object, but certain guidelines (at least those that work for me) seem to emerge through this writing. One is to ride an impulsive move toward whatever draws one to something in the object … Enter through this and describe exactly what is heard and seen … Soon one's own description begins not only to mimic the object, as a preliminary move, but also to redraw the object. (2001: xi)

Jayamanne offers a number of affective directives here, firstly in the claim that the description of the text must itself try to *move* the reader. She suggests criticism is a form of writing or cultural production that requires its own creativity at the same time as it responds to a stimulus. Implied here too is the idea that criticism should aspire to communicate and make infectious just how a text affects the critic. A degree of openness is needed for this to happen. An encounter is therefore defined by the way one person reacts to a given piece of work in its singularity. For Jayamanne, the act of appraisal has its own particular mediating function: it is not a 'dull copy' of the object, but a means to prolong, extend or spread some of the possibilities a text can be seen to contain. The critic is inspired by – and seeks to share – what is most striking, 'whatever draws one to something in the object'.

A poetic and innovative means to generate film theory, the concept of the 'mimetic double' also gives me a way to downplay the amount of deference I might otherwise attach to existing cultural studies accounts (these are examples of what draw other people to each writer's work). It is also to pre-empt the inevitable limitations of my readings of Grossberg, Ross and Morris, who have so far received far less critical attention in comparison with Hall and Hoggart. What I find fascinating and irresistible about all five writers is their voice – that is, their 'enunciative strategies' – their characteristic styles of intervention. A focus on the individual appeal of their voice is a way to describe this personal dimension, as opposed to the established interpretations haunting discussions of cultural studies' founding figures. I want to get the style of enunciation, the register and cadence of a writer into the conversation about a work's importance.

Employing Jayamanne's technique will also mean that my readings try to create a response which accords with the unique project of each writer alongside the task of drawing out their signature voice. This embraces Jayamanne's point that the act of criticism and response is itself a creative enterprise. It is most useful and stimulating when it generates its own examples, applications, lines of flight. As I describe 'what draws me' to each writer, I hope to do so in ways that can sit well with the spirit of their work but also embody a life of their own.

Sympathetic reading

From a different perspective I am attempting to produce what Morris calls a 'sympathetic' reading of cultural studies figures. Like Jayamanne's, this is an approach that takes its cues from the style of the individual work. It tries to suspend judgements that might determine one's initial reaction (in Morris's case, her feminism). It is a sympathetic reading exercise in the sense that it tries to resist the temptation to 'answer back'. Morris's position approaches 'the texts in question sympathetically in order to understand them *as* criticisms of those answers that my feminism might automatically provide, and so to use them to question my own assumptions and practices in the process of reading theirs' (1988a: 6). This difficult task requires an ability to recognise one's own biases in order to put them on a shelf and forget about them for the length of the 'encounter'. Only by doing so, Morris seems to say, can we really hear another writer's voice.

In the terms I am using, reading sympathetically is the way to open oneself to the possibility of empathy (Chapter 2), of working out where a writer is coming from. Suspending judgement is a way to leave oneself

open to being moved, of learning something new. At worst, it provides the most positive rendering of someone else's position in order to test the bases on which you decide not to pursue it yourself. In this way sympathetic reading offers a route for the possibility of maintaining affirmative relationships. It does away with the barriers that would prevent recognition of another's position in the hope that new kinds of appreciation and improved understanding might be possible.

Focusing on the failings of predecessors seems an easy way to further encourage an intellectual climate of hesitancy and fear, such that we might become scared ever to think or dream outside the paradigms of which we are sure. This scenario sets real limits on the kinds of possibilities academic work might contemplate in the future when there are already enough institutional expectations and government threats regarding the kind of research validated and endorsed in universities. Reading generously is also to remain mindful that from future perspectives, our own positions in the present may also be blind to omissions we cannot yet foresee.

Intellectual hospitality

In her reading of the laudatory essays of some of the past century's leading philosophers, Eleanor Kaufman has described this form of criticism I am interested in as the practice of 'intellectual hospitality'. Her book is a rare attempt to bestow significance to the positive affects of scholarly life, especially for the way that it reveals how complimentary writing often reiterates key elements of the work under discussion. In a gesture that clearly recalls Barthes's desire for *jouissance* in the encounter with a voice, Kaufman also endorses the 'possibility of *desubjectification,* or breakdown of identity' in the laudatory exchanges of intellectual peers:

> This mode is something other than a critical dialectic in which the ideas of one thinker are positioned against those of another. Rather than an effort at one-upmanship or an attempt to repudiate or revise another thinker's work, these essays work to a completely different end: praise and affirmation. In these laudatory essays there is no clear distinction between subject and object, but rather an exegetical celebration of the text at hand. The text is treated as if it were a holy text to be worshipped rather than one that might have human flaws … Moreover, this particular mode of exegesis is not one of restraint but rather of delirium – a delirium that signals the ecstatic breakdown of identity that occurs when it is no longer discernible what thought

> belongs to whom and whose voice is being heard at any given moment (2001: 7).

While in this book I hope to have avoided an excessive amount of praise for the writers under discussion, I share Kaufman's desire for a more affirmative means of engaging with the significance of colleagues' work and influence. In her words, this would be

> a new form of intellectual hospitality, a mode of being in common that is not a form of correcting or out-mastering the other, but rather a way of joining with the other in language or in thought so that what is created is a community of thought that knows no bounds, a hospitality that liquidates identity, a communism of the soul. (2001: 141)

Historical generosity

In order to 'enact an encounter' with these five voices, and suggest the ongoing usefulness of their interventionist strategies, my project faces a formidable literature of existing interpretation. In the case of Richard Hoggart (Chapter 2), this means tackling commonly held views that read his work as dangerously self-indulgent or nostalgic, as an elegy to a passing era of working-class values.[6] For Stuart Hall (Chapter 3), the challenge is saying anything really new about his work given the mountain of existing literature and the degree of influence he commands in cultural studies (see Gilroy et al., 2000; Morley and Chen, 1996). The mythic status of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) as the founding home for the field and the recent backlash against Hall's star status (see Rojek, 1998; 2003; 2005) all inflect the possibility of reading and responding to his work outside the inheritance of past responses. I hope that the inclusion of three contemporary figures is a way of providing some context and future trajectory for this established heritage, particularly for those who may not share the same emotional investment in earlier periods of the field's development.

Ultimately, in describing each of these figures I aim to offer a degree of generosity in my accounts, if only because it seems important that intellectual predecessors be recognised for creating the position from which critiques are now made.[7] Reading these writers sympathetically, trying to hear the distinct voices mobilised in their writing, means suspending some of the perspectives of the present in order to appreciate each project in the context of its conjunctural moment (it also means I have had

to be painfully selective in approaching the extensive oeuvre of each writer). But the point is to assess their respective interventions in positive terms, to reflect their significance in cultural studies' development. What distinguishes each writer I single out for discussion is that their particular voice makes a new form of academic discourse possible and acceptable within the university institution. A certain historical mindfulness is necessary to note the significance of this achievement.[8]

That said, I do not seek to offer these writers as role models for a particular version of cultural studies that is exemplary or right. This burden of representation is one of the key problems I suggest has plagued cultural studies' history, and which contributes to its present dilemma of finding appropriate successors to the field's 'true' vision (Bennett, 1998). This assemblage of writers from a range of historical conjunctures is an effort to resist a temporal narrative that often sees a narrative of progress in the intellectual 'styles' cultural studies intellectuals adopt.[9] It is to treat these voices as resources within a wider cache of strategies the field can utilise depending on the circumstances. Specific examples draw to light the *recurring* emphases and themes in cultural studies' development, and it will be clear that a number of the individual projects I focus on actually share aspects of each others' voices at different moments in their career. The category of 'voice' is therefore offered as a way to appreciate that the different strands of cultural studies' attention remain in constant and productive tension rather than as competing callings or paths that the field ought to follow.

What is at stake? The risks of being invested

In *Parables for the Virtual,* Brian Massumi (2002) suggests that humanities research needs to change its priorities so that negative critique might be used more 'sparingly': 'The balance has to shift to *affirmative* methods: techniques which embrace their own inventiveness and are not afraid to own up to the fact that they add (if so meagerly) to reality' (2002: 12–3). Massumi aspires to take 'seriously the idea that writing in the humanities can be affirmative or inventive' (2002: 17), and questions the dominant mode of investment at work in scholarly practice generally: 'Foster or debunk. It's a strategic question. Like all strategic questions, it is basically a question of timing and proportion. Nothing to do with morals or moralising. Just pragmatic' (2002: 13). In order to encourage writing that moves, sparks connections, and fosters exercises in imagining a better human future, *Cultural Studies' Affective Voices* responds to Massumi's provocation that established conventions of

reception and critique need reassessment. The stakes are the capacity for our work to touch others. The affective properties of scholarly voices offer the chance to spread conceptual advances and theoretical insights further than might otherwise be the case. Adopting an affective register can build momentum for a particular claim, amplifying a message beyond the confines of institutional settings.

An affective voice communicates a degree of investment and interest in the subject discussed. As Morris and Frow write, 'the intellectual project of cultural studies is always at some level marked … by a discourse of social *involvement*' (1993: xviii). Affective writing speaks directly, from the head and the heart, in response to something felt to be fundamentally important. It refuses a detached analysis. The 'individual thrill' of someone like Hall's voice is its 'will to connect': the guiding principle he once suggested for cultural studies, arising from a sense that 'there is something *at stake* in cultural studies, in a way I think, and hope, is not exactly true of many other very important intellectual and critical practices' (Hall, 1992a: 278). Cultural studies' particular commitment to communicating affect is an effort to convey the weightiness of its subject matter – weighty in that sense of a *heavy* heart – in ways unconventional, if not also treated with suspicion, in other disciplines. Viewed in this light, affective writing offers the chance for a wider project of intellectual engagement than methodological and disciplinary arguments.

This is what I mean by the idea of empathy in Chapter 2. It is a form of discursive connection that comes from a spirit of compassion – precisely a will to connect – a concern for the plight of others, and an interest in the positions others hold. Margaret Morse describes this process as the human desire for reciprocity: 'the reversibility of "I" and "you" in discourse – seeing and being seen, recognising others and being recognised, speaking, listening and being listened to' (1998: 10). Writing with empathy seeks to create this kind of relationship for more people, for the many not well served by the current distribution of speaking opportunities and positions. As Nick Couldry indicates, this empathic ideal to which cultural studies aspires reveals it to be 'a fully sceptical form of enquiry in which every attempt to speak in one's own voice (inside and outside formal academic practice) is *meshed* with an obligation to listen to the voices of others' (1996: 329).

Here the importance of listening to individual voices cannot be overestimated. As Robbins also suggests, 'even at our most private, even in what we hope or fear may be professional soliloquy, we are to some extent looking over our shoulders, listening for other voices and

adapting our own to what we think we hear' (1993: 89). Robbins claims the intellectual listens 'for' the public in two senses:

> We listen so as to hear what the public may be saying, and we listen *to ourselves, on behalf of* the public, which is of course us too. Both senses invite us to surrender the illusion of a professional identity that is hermetically sealed and to recognise instead the social reality of an identity that is looser, less autonomous, more diversely populated. (ibid.)

Both Couldry and Robbins advocate a professional stance which questions the unnecessary distinctions between speakers and listeners:

> Whether or not we are academics, we cannot avoid speaking 'about' others: indeed, if you take it as axiomatic that discursive resources are unequally distributed, then for academics to use their discursive resources to reveal the places where others are speaking may sometimes help those others to be heard. (Couldry, 1996: 324)

Empathic, affective writing tries to overcome the alienation that prevents people from knowing each other in complex cultures segregated by resources, location and opportunity. This is the situated political role cultural studies' interventionist voices achieve. Used 'strategically', as Couldry argues, the knowledge cultural studies produces with the discursive authority of the academic sphere 'can displace other accounts, which may initially have greater authority or prevalence. By "cutting" into other accounts … it may create space for others to speak, far beyond the contemplation of the academic sphere itself' (1996: 325).

These gestures Couldry attributes to cultural studies are clearly in sympathy with hooks's description of the field earlier in this chapter. The empathic discourse Couldry identifies demonstrates not only a willfulness in its use of affect, but a 'will to connect' differently placed people – those that society's present arrangements leave distant from each other. The voices described in this book are examples of cultural studies' democratic desire to seek avenues for identification and connection with many different readers. Each finds common concerns and values which might encourage understanding between disparate groups. This is a practice which forges dialogue between disciplines and cultural institutions while extending cultural debates to the everyday, to the mainstream reader.[10]

A discourse of empathy relates what might be unfamiliar in approachable terms. This is not to say that empathy always or even often flows from those *with* 'power' to those without. It is to say that when the scriptural economy of speaking opportunities is unfairly weighted, an empathic and situated political practice might include an assessment of the unnecessary barriers maintained by scholarly discourse. An awareness and concerted use of the privilege of a sanctioned voice is an important step towards destabilising the continued existence of such barriers.[11] As Morris puts it, this involves developing 'deep, practical knowledge of what it means to speak *differently with* (not for or to) different people in different contexts' (1998a: 506). For Morris, to be useful to a community means learning '*as academics* to use other social languages with grace, complexity and skill' (ibid.).[12]

The fact about affect

If affect and empathy trouble traditional epistemological foundations of rationality, detachment and objectivity, this adds weight to the political significance of the cultural studies intervention in the academy. As Michèle Barrett (2000) observes, some of the more established fields of the humanities and social sciences remain somewhat sceptical of these advances. In her own field of sociology, Barrett notes 'an accommodation of sorts' with the methods of cultural studies:

> But for many sociologists the screw is turning a bit too far and they don't want it to go all the way round. There is a fightback currently under way which takes the form of an urging 'let's go back' – let's go back to political economy, let's go back to the founding fathers, let's go back to epistemological realism. But 'going back' is not usually the best option. The cultural turn is better thought of as a cultural revolution (2000: 14–5).

Barrett describes the suspicion and discomfort of disciplinary colleagues faced with the sites and practices considered legitimate for investigation in cultural studies. But the idea that one might 'go back' to something considered to be pure political economy speaks of a wider reluctance to acknowledge the concrete political and economic consequences affect and emotion bring. As Massumi's work consistently demonstrates (Massumi, 2002; 1996), 'the ultimate foundation of the capitalist monetary system' is nothing if not 'faith', if not 'a mindset' (2002: 45). The market is a daily barometer of sentiment, affect and expectation. Economic parameters for judgement are nothing if not

projections of confidence and of hope in the future. This is the danger to which we are all exposed in an increasingly global economy:

> The ability of affect to produce an economic effect more swiftly and surely than economics itself means that affect is a real condition, an intrinsic variable of the late capitalist system, as infrastructural as a factory… This fact about affect – its matter-of-factness needs to be taken into account in cultural and political theory. (ibid.)

Massumi's approach questions the presumption guiding the backwards glances of Barrett's colleagues – the belief that political economy is somehow distanced from cultural studies' emphasis on affect. Both Barrett and Massumi argue in favour of self-reflexivity in epistemological assumptions, calling for an honest appraisal of the procedural habits of their respective disciplines. As such, these two writers are attractive models for a new generation of scholars seeking an intellectual practice comfortable with interdisciplinary and post-structuralist methods. Considering Hall's contribution over the decades, Barrett suggests that sociologists' hostility towards cultural studies often stems from their dependence on a modernist imaginary, and hence, a lack of analytical revision in light of social change. As she writes, 'things which we cannot control', including 'the imaginative, the sensual, the emotional, the other' continue to pose challenging topics for sociological analysis (2000: 14). At transition times like these, when disciplinary guardians remain attached to preferred languages, I hope empathic writing and reading practices can make the changing functions of academic practice a less traumatic and hostile development. The affective contagion of the critical discourse I seek to outline makes matters of address, audience and assumption procedural. This facilitates a wider dissemination of new ideas while endorsing the benefits of sharing insights.

Politically speaking

Such empathic gestures are also vital in a political climate similarly hesitant to celebrate the positive new opportunities afforded by post-structuralism. The backlash against cultural studies from some disciplines strongly resembles the complaints of left-wing political actors who question the legitimacy of cultural politics as a form of radical engagement. Using Walter Benjamin's work on melancholia, Wendy Brown (2000) sees such criticisms as representative of the Left's inadequate response to the post-World War II political environment.

Brown's sophisticated appraisal argues that Left ideologues are troubled by changing political milieux because of a pathological attachment to revolutionary ideals that have failed. As she writes:

> Attachment to the object of one's sorrowful loss supersedes any desire to recover from this loss, to live free of it in the present, to be unburdened by it. This is what renders melancholia a persistent condition, a state, indeed, a structure of desire, rather than a transient response to death or loss. (2000: 22)

The structure of desire encapsulated in the idea of the workers' movement here prevents any reckoning with the positive political potential harboured by post-structuralist insights. A circuit of mourning for the loss of revolutionary possibility thwarts any serious analysis of the new opportunities afforded in the present. This melancholy, which might also be seen as a form of nostalgia, has the effect of dismissing the significance of a new generation of progressive political actors – particularly when it is reinforced by left-wing sociologists who also advocate a return to the past certainties assumed in the idea of political economy. As long as these outdated ideas about revolution and radicality continue to be mourned, the paradigms which might consider current interventions as serving Leftist goals remain elusive. 'What emerges', according to Brown, is a Left that operates without either a substantive critique of the status quo or a 'substantive alternative to it'. This is a Left 'that has become more attached to its impossibility than to its potential fruitfulness, a Left that is most at home dwelling not in hopefulness but in its own marginality and failure, (2000: 27).

Moving beyond the version of Left politics Brown describes, this book attempts to document the progressive alliances which *are* evident in the present, free from the nostalgia of preferred political interpretations. Indeed part of my justification for concentrating on Hoggart, Hall, Grossberg, Ross and Morris is that each refuses to accept the narrative of Left failure described by Brown.[13]

In this way, I seek to continue a tradition of intellectual interest first evident in formative debates of cultural studies, and insufficiently developed since. In the pages of *Politics and Letters*, *Universities and Left Review* and the early *New Left Review*, a guiding concern was to establish the political priorities encouraged by a more affluent society, one no longer marked by clear class categories.[14] The British New Left were interested in the reasons why working-class voters preferred conservative governments. The writers' fascination with the conceptual and

political consequences of greater social wealth – which they encapsulated in the term *embourgeoisment* – was a fear of the unknown: What parameters would influence political expression outside values of class? Would a classless society spell the end of any political movement led by the workers? With the end of the Cold War, and the beginning of the more recent 'War on Terror', the techniques for gauging a Leftist position have blurred even further. Yet the following chapters argue that the unpredictability of the contemporary political subject – the inability to ever assume a necessary ideological home – is something that might be embraced rather than mourned by progressives. An important history of political action and subversion risks being forgotten with the unreconstructed parameters for analysis advocated by the traditional Left. The challenge I take from Brown and others is to find the adequate modes of receptivity and reflexivity which can incorporate new forms of political practice to service a Left cause. Here I'll suggest cultural studies' affective, empathic voices are one way to illuminate these practices.

Communicating investment

In what follows, I do not mean to suggest that cultural studies ought to use affect at the expense of any other form of writing, that it should ever put considerations of style before substance. In fact, I am purposefully writing against the tendency for affect to appear as *mere* rhetoric or false accusation in the field's history – the manufactured urgency of the imperative present often heard in demands that cultural studies put politics before theory. I am also opposed to employing affective writing in order to cover up the difficult and often unglamorous business of scholarly research. *Pure* affect is not a method, and the genre of metacommentary is one that, while convenient for the purposes of professional output, does not constitute the sort of impact I am describing here. The positive affects I am claiming for cultural studies are those of solidarity, commitment and hope. As Chapter 4 will argue, these are the forces required to maintain belief in the significance of human-centred scholarship in a world of pervasive cynicism, commerce and fear.

The task of creating connections of 'reciprocity', of ushering empathic human relations cannot be reconciled with the mass-publication demands of bullet points and chapter goals. It means writing about the way the world can be thought and dreamt at a particular moment. Affective writing does not demand a fixed answer; it is not obliged to reach an externally generated learning outcome. Its function is to create wonder, interest and the desire to go on learning. This form of

writing is content with the goal of *moving* people, making them invested in the world. At a time when the 'anaesthetic writing' evident in many other discursive contexts 'lacks almost everything needed to put in words an opinion or emotion' (Watson, 2003: 3), an important function cultural studies plays is to seek out more lively uses of language and amplify these voices for more listeners to hear.

A founding tenet of cultural studies is the notion that 'culture is ordinary' and not a class privilege (Williams, 1958b). This fundamental lesson from Williams has led many to pursue a vocation that seeks ways to make obvious one's similarity with others; to enable a project of mutual understanding through empathy. As he concludes:

> A writer's job is with individual meanings, and with making these meanings common. I find these meanings in the expansion, there along the journey where the necessary changes are writing themselves into the land, and where the language changes but the voice is the same. (1958b: 92)

As I try to make common what five writers mean to me, this is a thought to keep prominent. What attracts me to them, and what I seek to express in each 'mimetic double', is the solidarity they share despite different times and locations. Their voices speak a 'will to connect', but each voice is responsive to 'the necessary changes' brought with time. Describing the way their work speaks, and what it sparks in my head and heart, I hope to generate fresh insight and new life to their work. These are the constructive and empowering affects under-narrated in academic practice: the positive energies, the optimistic trajectories each passage encourages as you read. Hoggart mentions them in his own reflections on student life, recalling the lamentable effects of an education system which exposes its passionate material so fleetingly:

> It was as though, to get through to the point at university at which you sat those eight or nine papers on different periods and genres, you could not allow the force of the works to flood into you; you might have been pushed off course … You did not for those three years dare to release yourself to the power of the works; you controlled your responses to them, almost unconsciously. (1990: 196)

Despite the pressures of institutional location, cultural studies must aspire to relate these moments of delight and wonder that play such an important role in our lives as scholars. For it is only by describing

the constructive qualities of the academic vocation that the pleasures of learning and sharing new ideas might be made plain to more people, and scholarly life appear a more plausible option for the many who have not always been welcome in the exclusive circles of the university. Hoggart and others in cultural studies instigate new voices for legitimate academic practice, recognising that much of the real joy of the profession is lost when its affective, inspiring and regenerative aspects are ignored. For those of us invested in the university as the appropriate location for cultural studies' ongoing interventions, our challenge is to communicate the continued worth of scholarly life despite the difficulties of present conditions. Brett Neilson and Angela Mitropoulos (2005) recently argue that, 'until now, an excess of passion has served as an ostensibly non-coercive means to bind the academic labourer to the university system', but that 'there is no necessity which decrees that it cannot be otherwise, facilitating an exodus, a demand for another university, here and now'. The following chapters gauge the extent to which cultural studies has succeeded in reforming entrenched discursive paradigms of academic practice to make the university a strategic home for the field. It remains to be seen whether a project premised on care, concern and empathy for the plight of others can survive in a system increasingly focused, like every other, on commercialisation imperatives; and whether, as a result, cultural studies scholars may be forced to take their investments elsewhere.

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