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Culture from Arnold to Schwarzenegger

Imperial Literacy to Pop Culture (destination democracy?)

Cultural Studies and mass society theory

Cultural studies was the study of mass or popular culture, especially the mass media in a mass society. It was also preoccupied with cultural politics, which in this context referred to a struggle between popular or mass culture and high or minority culture. However, that struggle was only seen as such by one side of the supposed contest. Very few individuals or organisations within the domain of popular culture itself sought actively to defeat or destroy high culture, least of all on behalf of the claims of the popular. If they took any notice, it was usually quite respectful, not to say reverential, as a viewing of almost any big-screen Shakespeare would instantly reveal. Militancy was confined to those who thought it necessary to struggle against *popular* culture on behalf of high or minority culture.

These struggles began as an imperial discourse on the governability or otherwise of the masses in Britain. The 1860s to 1880s was a period of:

- **political agitation.** The second Reform Act of 1867 extended the franchise to virtually all mature men;
- **educational reform.** The Education Acts of 1870–81 established free, compulsory, elementary schooling;
- **imperial ascendancy** (not to mention Fenian outrages). The British Empire had painted the world map red, bringing under the governance of the British crown ever more disparate, unruly and resistant subjects from all inhabited continents;
- **commercial and scientific materialism.** Coal was king, and Darwinism was coming of age;
- **population explosion.** The world's first megalopolises were growing up in London, Birmingham and the Black Country, Manchester and Glasgow.

It was in this mix that culture first became a political hot potato.

Struggle, democratisation, and the masses

Some, led by Matthew Arnold (son of Thomas Arnold, pioneering headmaster of Rugby School), who was himself both a poet and an Inspector of Schools, felt that under these pressures traditional spiritual and moral values, and cultural tastes, were under immediate threat of extinction. Even national political disintegration ('anarchy') was feared. The answer, it transpired, was to be found in high culture. The idea was not to produce more of it, but to train leaders and masses alike to respond to the existing canon of great works, as the antidote to mass society.

The 'struggle' strand

Arnold's vision found its fullest expression in the twentieth century in the works and schemes of F.R. Leavis, whose militant opposition to modern industrial life was only matched by his insistence on the 'redemptive power of English' (Mathieson, 1975: 96–7). For forty years between the 1930s and the 1960s, Leavis drummed out the same message – English Literature was the moral centre of the school curriculum; and he demonstrated in his publications how he thought literary criticism ought to be done, in the cause of preserving the language and 'fine' responses to it. Leavisite ideas proved influential in universities, schools and teacher education programmes, not least through Leavis's journal *Scrutiny*, as well as in university English departments. In schools the emphasis was not only on the practice of literary criticism, but also on militant opposition to the supposed deadening effects of mass culture (Mathieson: 96).

Later the Leavisite 'resistance' to mass society was recast as class struggle, where the enemy was still commercial media and popular culture, but the good guys were intellectuals rather than poets; political radicals rather than literary missionaries. Stuart Hall's first book, *The Popular Arts*, co-written with Paddy Whannel in 1964, is an interesting halfway house between Leavisite lit-crit and the more explicitly class-based (Marxist) analysis of popular culture for which he eventually became better known. Richard Hoggart's *Uses of Literacy* occupies the same ground, with a more explicit debt to Leavis.

Later again the notion of struggle was rejected in favour of a concern with policy, and Marxist models were supplanted by the Foucauldian notion of 'governmentality,' in a reformist cultural studies led by Tony Bennett (see Chapter 4). But there was still something oddly Arnoldian about this, despite the change in rhetoric. The idea was still to explore the cultural sector for techniques for governing mass, anonymous populations. And while Leavisite histrionics had been explicitly abandoned, along with any interest in poetry, Bennett's own longstanding interest in the history of museums meant that there was still a strong focus on the use of public cultural institutions for the formation of citizenship.

The 'democratisation' strand

Meanwhile, and alongside, another strand of cultural studies pursued an understanding of popular culture based not on struggle but on democratisation. This strand had its antecedents in the same literary and analytical traditions as those involved above (from Arnold to Bennett), but was characterised by a non-metropolitan, provincial and suburban mode. It was less concerned with governability than with emancipation; less interested in class antagonism than in the productive capacity of cultural systems; less interested in governmentality than in the media as vehicles for the extension of 'cultural citizenship'. The work of Meaghan Morris and John Fiske, in rather different ways, came into this category, as has my own.

More recently, popular culture and high culture were reunited in the cause of national and regional economic development, recast as the 'creative industries' (<http://www.creativeindustries.org.uk/>; <http://www.culture.gov.uk/creative/mapping.html>; www.creativeindustries.qut.com). The creative industries emerged as content-providers for the new economy (Leadbeater, 1997). 'Cultural entrepreneurs' created wealth as well as culture, using 'thin-air' resources like talent and intangible assets like know-how.

As befitted a non-metropolitan or provincial mode of cultural studies, the *democratisation* branch did not so much oppose as differentiate itself from the predominant *struggle* school of thought. It trod the same path as Williams, Hall, Bennett and so on (learning from them to disagree, as it were), but saw different features in the landscape – sometimes a different vista altogether. It was more preoccupied with meanings (story, song, spectacle, speech) than with power; more optimistic in mood; more inclined to take ordinariness as an end of democratisation, not as a means to power; less interested in ruling than in teaching. Its own antecedents, being non-metropolitan and therefore dispersed into mutually unacquainted provincial traditions, were rarely recorded in the standardised histories of the discipline. In my own case, as a product of the Cardiff school of cultural studies (see Turner, 1990: 83–4, and below), the important antecedents were S. L. Bethell and Terence Hawkes.

Both strands of cultural studies were interested in popular culture: the struggle branch in its structural position within a radically unequal class society founded on capital and inherited privilege; the democratisation branch in the possibilities of renewal from below. Both saw popular culture largely in terms of contemporary, urban, mediated leisure pursuits (i.e. not as folk culture) – centred on the popular arts like the movies and television, popular music and dancing, photography and fashion, tourism and motoring.

However, these activities did not present themselves to cultural studies as innocent pursuits undertaken by a fun-loving populace without a care in the world. Cultural studies didn't go in for the Jeremy Clarkson (presenter of the BBC's car show, *Top Gear*) provocative, opinionated but ultimately celebratory mode of address. On the contrary, popular culture came to cultural studies

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under a very black cloud. Popular culture presented itself not as ‘popular’ (‘well-liked’; ‘widespread’), but as *mass-cult*: manipulation of the de-individuated masses by money-crazed moguls and power-crazed demagogues. Pop culture was seen as the opposite, indeed the nemesis, of culture itself, which was defended – for the sake of the spiritual, moral or political health of the society that spurned it – by a minority of cultural intellectuals. From this perspective it was hard to see mass culture in terms of democratisation, emancipation, productive capacity, cultural citizenship, meanings, optimism, ordinariness, teaching and renewal from below. It didn’t matter whether the critics were on the political Right (Leavis, T.S. Eliot, Wyndham Lewis), or on the Left (Hall, Hoggart): mass culture was a common enemy.

Indeed, the struggle school of thought was directly in line of succession to the cultural intellectuals who opposed mass culture from the start, as will be shown below. The preoccupation with governability or governmentality, class struggle, power and rule in the sphere of culture came directly from a view of the masses as a *threat* both to culture and to the good governance of the polity. Left and Right agreed on that; the Left seeing it as an opportunity to exploit – in the name of a coming restructuring of society by revolution; the Right wanting to contain it. Both also tended to agree that the masses were somehow not fully alive; that they were deadened or narcotised by their encounters with cinema, advertising and commercial fiction. Cultural studies, as an emancipatory discourse, was itself ‘governed’ by an intellectual tradition with sometimes alarmingly anti-democratic tendencies.

The masses

There were not always masses; they were a special product of modernity. Previously there were, of course, different kinds of collective populations, including classical plebeians, medieval laity, foreign hordes and the ever-present mob. Many words persist in English as a reminder that the view of the populace by those who wrote about them was not often very complimentary. The *OED* (1st edn) derived the word ‘populace’ from Latin, via Italian, with a quotation from Florio: ‘the grosse, base, vile, common people, the riraffe people’. It glossed the word as: ‘the mass of the people of a community, as distinguished from the titled, wealthy, or educated classes; the common people; *invidiously*, the mob, the rabble’. It traced this distinction between ‘masses’ and ‘classes’ to W.E. Gladstone (British Prime Minister) in 1886.

Used to describe large numbers – but not the *general population*, since ‘the mass’ was distinguished from other ‘classes’ – ‘the mass of the people of a community’ might have seemed a neutral and trans-historical description, applicable to such populations anywhere at any time. But in fact there was little neutrality even in the dictionary. ‘The mass’ described an amorphous, internally undifferentiated body, seen from the outside not from within; ‘often with the notion of

oppressive or bewildering abundance' (*OED* 'mass' 4a). When applied to human beings it referred to 'a multitude of persons mentally viewed as forming an aggregate in which their individuality is lost' (*OED* 'mass' 5a). This 'mass' was set in *class* antagonism to the aristocratic (titled), capitalist (wealthy) and literate (educated) classes. Common people were *coterminous* with what was feared from them ('mob, rabble'), and of course they were denied title, wealth and education, even individuality, by the very definition that produced them. So 'mass' was hardly a neutral term in itself (see also Raymond Williams on 'the masses' in *Culture and Society*, 1961: 287ff.).

Moreover, its plural form, 'the masses', had already come to be applied to the 'lower orders' as opposed to 'the classes' (*OED* 'mass' 6c) – the bewilderingly over-abundant if not actually surplus 'populace' produced by modernity, industrialisation and imperial expansionism. Here of course the dictionary merely followed usage, which was itself remarkably consistent in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries about the import of these terms. In his polemical book *The Intellectuals and the Masses*, John Carey noted how the pejorative or invidious view of the masses was held right across the spectrum of the educated classes from Left to Right.

To a degree what both [H.G.] Wells and Hitler reflect, and what they appeal to in their readers, are the hostility and loss of focus induced in modern consciousness by a world where populousness defeats the imagination. Given the multitudes by which the individual is surrounded, it is virtually impossible to regard everyone else as having an individuality equivalent to one's own. The mass, as a reductive and dismissive concept, is invented to ease this difficulty. (1992: 201)

Following Nietzsche, it seemed that fear and loathing of the masses was almost a condition of entry into the intellectual or educated class. Carey showed in detail how Hitler, as revealed in his own writings, held orthodox, even 'stereotypical' intellectual views about both high and mass art (Carey: 198–208). Carey argued that the consequent dehumanisation of 'the mass' was a prerequisite of the Holocaust:

Contemplating the extermination of Jews was made easier by thinking of them as a mass. Mass transportation, destruction and incineration, and the mass production of fertiliser from their ashes, all acquired a certain appropriateness once the initial proposal that they were a mass – not fully alive people – was accepted. In this sense the Holocaust could be seen as the ultimate indictment of the idea of the mass and its acceptance by twentieth-century intellectuals. (Carey: 206)

Carey concluded his book with a critique of Hitler's ideas on culture – but what was sauce for the goose, he insisted, had to be sauce for the gander:

The contention, then, that Hitler's ideas on culture were trivial, half-baked and disgusting [these terms were Hugh Trevor-Roper's] can be allowed only if the same epithets are applied to numerous cultural ideas prevalent among English intellectuals

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of the first half of the twentieth century, some of which are still espoused today. The superiority of 'high' art, the eternal glory of Greek sculpture and architecture, the transcendent value of the old masters and of classical music, the supremacy of Shakespeare, Goethe and other authors acknowledged by intellectuals as great, the divine spark that animates all productions of genius and distinguishes them from the low amusements of the mass – these were among Hitler's most dearly held beliefs. (1992: 208)

Hitler's intellectually standard views on the literary and artistic canon were matched by his intellectually standard views on popular culture:

His contempt for 'gutter journalism', advertising and 'cinema bilge', his espousal of the aristocratic principle, and his comparison of the 'dunderheaded multitude' with women and children, are other features that readers . . . will have no difficulty matching in intellectual discourse. (ibid.)

For Carey, the lesson of Hitler was not that his views were 'disgusting', but that they were all too familiar: 'his various rewritings of the mass – as exterminable subhumans, as an inhibited bourgeois herd, as noble workers, as a peasant pastoral – will also be familiar intellectual devices. The tragedy of *Mein Kampf* is that it was not, in many respects, a deviant work but one firmly rooted in European intellectual orthodoxy' (ibid.).

Cultural studies inherited 'European intellectual orthodoxy' in good measure. The perennial debates about popular and high culture, and about the impact of mass media on mass society, were riddled with the prejudices of literary intellectuals who had pondered with Malthusian alarm the 'populousness' that 'defeats the imagination' as the Industrial Revolution gathered pace and produced exponentially more people. Intellectuals of the twentieth century were dogged by philosophies of scarcity: more people meant less culture in a zero-sum game. A philosophy of plenty, such as that embodied in the 'bring me your huddled masses' ideology of democratising and industrialising modern America, was just as threatening to the intellectuals of Europe as was its own home-grown totalitarianism.

But America had recognised something crucial, no matter how individualist and commercial its expression. What was peculiar about these new masses, compared to pre-modern mobs, was that although they were amorphous, unknowable and had 'lost' their individuality (viewed from the outside), they were increasingly *sovereign*. Unnumbered, anonymous, the 'masses' were also 'masters' – they could vote, consume, sustain major institutions and cultural forms (from unions to cinema), and take physical actions, from fun to fighting, that might have national or international cultural consequences. They began to win civic rights, political citizenship, and a claim on health, education and social security entitlements (see Evans, 1998, especially xii–xiii and 652–3).

Meanwhile, they were subject to scientific investigation and psychological experiment, to missionaries and educationalists, all of whom wanted to bridge

the gulf of unknowability, in order to fill the gap with their own knowledge, behaviour, belief and enlightenment. As Carey put it, 'intellectuals believe in giving the public what intellectuals want; that, generally speaking is what they mean by education' (Carey, 1992: 6).

The politics of reading

But the fortress was culture itself. Mass citizenship of the domain of taste was resisted long after it had been established. Accusations of dumbing down accompanied every encroachment of popular culture into previously reserved areas. Music, drama, visual arts, literature: all were roped off from their popular counterparts – pop music, cinema and TV, fashion and photography, and journalism. Democratisation of culture proceeded apace. Newspapers, cinema, tourism, pulp fiction and music hall were all well established by the turn of the twentieth century. But each new scene of popular participation and pleasure was greeted by catcalls and boos from the intellectual balcony.

The very last bastion inside the citadel of culture was *literary reading*. This was because literary reading and response were taken to be the true test of a cultured individual. Literary culture had been promoted by Arnold and his successors as the antidote to both kinds of materialism – that of science, which was held to undermine religion, and that of consumerism, which was held to undermine morals. Literary culture was espoused with truly missionary zeal; its proponents thought it would save the nation, by making the masses (both middle-class philistines and labouring populace) more alive, more human. 'The reader' was shifted from private study and enjoyment to the centre of public life: the masses were to be taught to read, whether they liked it or not; and not for their own economic well-being, but for the soul of the nation, as it were. In a secular age, the populace were to find in poetry what they were feared to have lost in religion. If they had abandoned Bunyan and Wesley, let them read not the *News of the World* but Wordsworth.

Arnold secured the compulsory recitation of English poetry in elementary schools throughout England and Wales (Mathieson, 1975: 39–40). Indeed, as Margaret Mathieson pointed out in her valuable study of *The Preachers of Culture*:

Above all, it was to poetry that Arnold looked for the redemption of the middle and lower classes in a society which was not only politically disturbed but appeared to be losing religion at the same time as it was threatened by science. The religious role which he desired for poetry is clear. . . . Moral zeal, therefore, which was a characteristic both of the Victorian headmasters concerned about the development of their pupils into leaders of society, and of the evangelicals anxious to protect the newly literate masses against corrupting reading matter, is clearly an important part of Arnold's support for literature. (Mathieson, 1975: 39–40)

The terms set by Arnold determined the approach to literary culture for a century thereafter. 'Moral zeal which he inherited from his father, defensiveness into

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which the opposition drove him . . . and concern about his society's political unrest, all led Arnold to state the case for literature in tones whose passion and vagueness have characterised much of the argument about the subject' (Mathieson: 44).

The scene was set, the lines learned, even the intonation was prescribed: passion and vagueness, moral zeal and defensiveness. Exorbitant claims were made on behalf of an activity people would only do under compulsion in schools, imposed by a literary minority on a society from which they themselves felt only alienation. But this strange mixture of paranoia and self-aggrandisement was – apparently – the very essence of the literary reader. In *A History of Reading* the Argentinian writer Alberto Manguel discussed the invention of eyeglasses in medieval Europe. In a passage ostensibly devoted to the spread of spectacles (reading glasses) in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, he interrupted his historical narrative with an anecdote about his own history:

Most readers, then and now, have at some time experienced the humiliation of being told that their occupation is reprehensible. I remember being laughed at, during one recess in grade six or seven, for staying indoors and reading, and how the taunting ended with me sprawled face down on the floor, my glasses kicked into one corner, my book into another. (Manguel, 1996: 296)

This personal recollection of childish humiliation was the principal evidence used by Manguel to generalise a notion of an adversarial relationship between 'the' taunted reader and an uncomprehending, bullying world. Apparently, without need for further remark, it applied to 'most readers' over a five-hundred-year period:

Buried in books, isolated from the world of facts and flesh, feeling superior to those unfamiliar with the words preserved between dusty covers, the bespectacled reader . . . was seen as a fool, and glasses became emblematic of intellectual arrogance. (ibid.)

Within a few pages, the terms Manguel used to oppose reader and world – one side feeling isolated, threatened but superior, an oppressed minority, the other side prone to violence and mocking or ignorant laughter – were applied to something much more significant than lonely four-eyed boys and their tormentors:

Which came first? The invention of the masses, which Thomas Hardy described as a 'throng of people . . . containing a certain minority who have sensitive souls; these, and the aspects of these, being what is worth observing', or the invention of the bespectacled Book Fool, who thinks himself superior to the rest of the world and whom the rest of the world passes by, laughing? (Manguel, 1996: 302)

'Which came first?' Manguel projected his personal reader's persecution complex, as it were, back into history, then brought it forward to the modern era *as* history. He made Matthew Arnold the modern inheritor of the guise of the

bespectacled Book Fool, 'who thinks himself superior to the rest of the world' while 'the rest of the world passes by, laughing'. But Arnold also gave that figure national and even international significance. For Arnold installed the idea that 'superiority' in the matter of literary reading, in a period of industrialisation, democratisation and commercialisation, was a prerequisite for national survival.

According to Manguel, Arnold's 'splendid arrogance' in this matter merely followed classical precedent (he cited Seneca and Socrates), in seeking to distinguish between those who could, and could not, 'read well'.

Right and wrong readers: for Socrates there appears to be a 'correct' interpretation of a text, available to only a few informed specialists. In Victorian England, Matthew Arnold would echo this splendidly arrogant opinion: 'We . . . are for giving the heritage neither to the Barbarians nor to the Philistines, nor yet to the Populace'. (Manguel: 302)

Manguel thought that ancients and moderns alike were deluded: 'The argument that opposes those with the right to read, because they can read "well" (as the fearful glasses seem to indicate), and those to whom reading must be denied, because "they wouldn't understand", is as ancient as it is specious' (ibid.).

A specious argument, perhaps, but as cultural policy it proved spectacularly successful. For one thing, it organised Manguel's own characterisation of reading as a pretext for persecution. More importantly, 'correct reading' was to be 'denied' to the 'Populace' (the masses), as well as to Arnold's equally undeserving 'Barbarians' (the huntin', shootin' and fishin' landed gentry) and 'Philistines' (the complacent bourgeoisie), because it was required for the purposes of *government*.

One of the implications of industrialisation was that the popular classes, who had for centuries been regarded as little better than the mob when it came to political activity, were now the sovereign power in the land. They were, at least in significant sections, urban, literate, organised and articulate, unlike generations of agricultural labourers before them (Thompson, 1963). But the prospect they presented to the established classes was of Paris 1789 mixed with Captain Swing – revolutionary insurrection and class vengeance. How to make a barely governable mob capable of government (as traditionally understood by the established hierarchy), at least in the exercise of their votes? How to bridle the 'Englishman's right,' as Arnold playfully put it, to 'march where he likes, meet where he likes, enter where he likes, hoot as he likes, threaten as he likes, smash as he likes' (Arnold, 1869, cited in Williams, 1961: 132)? Universal franchise and universal education *required* that the state should pay attention to what the anonymous masses thought and said, since those masses were, despite their feared tendency towards anarchy, sovereign.

Culture and Anarchy would cast a very long shadow over the history of cultural studies, as it did the curriculum subject English too. Arnold argued that the antidote to 'anarchy' was 'culture'. His three classes, the Barbarians, Philistines and the Populace – loosely based on the British upper, middle and lower

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classes – were *all* ‘uncultured’ in his sense. Aristocrat, capitalist and worker – all were incapable of ‘reading well’. How to ensure the continuation of national greatness? Those who would take on the burden of public service needed above all to be cultured, and the core of culture was the ability to ‘read well’.

Literary reading became a qualification for entry into the imperial civil service. And ‘reading well’ meant not simply reading, but reading ‘well’; that meant reading *literary criticism*:

I dreamt last night that Shakespeare’s ghost
Sat for a Civil Service post;
The English paper for the year
Had several questions on *King Lear*
Which Shakespeare answered very badly
Because he hadn’t read his Bradley. (Cited in Hawkes, 1986: 31)

A.C. Bradley, Professor of Poetry at Oxford, published *Shakespearean Tragedy* in 1904. It is still in print, and will be, presumably for ever. Terence Hawkes assessed the importance of this book not only by quoting the above facetious comic verse of the 1920s, but also by claiming for Bradley the status of:

one of those books whose influence extends far beyond the confines of its ostensible subject, permeating the attitudes to morality, psychology and politics of hundreds and thousands of English-speaking people . . . [it] almost functions, through a system of universal education which has established the study of Shakespeare as its linchpin, as part of the air we breathe. (Hawkes: 31).

It was Bradley who instated psychological realism and the study of character on the site of Shakespeare’s plays, which were to be read (not attended). ‘Shakespeare’ became a catechism for learning eternal moral verities, not a popular dramatist.

The ability to discern Victorian–Edwardian moral individualism in Elizabethan–Jacobean political allegory became the test of reading ‘well’ – reading *into* ‘Shakespeare’ what *literary criticism* said was there. In fact it wasn’t there, nor for historical and other reasons could it be there, as Hawkes elegantly and extensively demonstrated over a long polemical career. Therefore generations of groaning children learned simultaneously that ‘Shakespeare’ was high-value cultural currency, and that they were unable to figure it out for themselves. This quiet, mass-scale exercise in personal humiliation simply demonstrated that ‘reading well’ was a minority achievement. Youngsters intoned the catechism when required, and then they watched TV or went to the movies, never alerted to the connections. Meanwhile, prominent persons who wanted to reproach the present times became habituated to a genre of rhetoric that lamented the lack of ‘Shakespeare’ in educational curricula while pouring scorn on any attempt to teach human, dramatic and moral themes via attention to contemporary drama such as *Buffy*, *Batman*, *Mr Bean* . . . and the latest news pictures from Beirut, Baghdad, Beijing.

Margaret Mathieson put in a nutshell why *literary* culture loomed so large in culture wars for so long. The Arnoldian view of art, in a secularising century, required literature to take over from religion as the moral centre of civilised education:

From Coleridge, through Arnold, to F.R. Leavis, the need has been expressed for a class of cultivated men whose concern is with the quality of their society's life. Since 'quality' had come to be identified with or even equated with the ability to respond to and discriminate between great works of art, this élite has been distinguished above all by its degree of literary culture. (Mathieson, 1975: 40–1)

The stage was set for a kind of struggle for 'superiority' between the 'bespectacled Book Fool', on the one hand, and the 'rest of the world passing by and laughing', on the other. In the name of culture, the former could assess and evaluate the latter. The purpose of art was to reprove, reproach and condemn the products and pastimes of commercial and popular culture, and indeed the entire society in which masses were taught *passive* political conformity – and simultaneously incited to *active* violent excess – though their entertainments (their laughter, in fact). Here was a recipe for the 'superiority' of 'culture' – 'the best that has been thought and said in the world', in Arnold's famous phrase (Mathieson: 41–2) – as a weapon with which to belabour the despised masses, not to enlighten but further to dehumanise them.

This for example was what Q.D. Leavis (F.R.'s spouse), in her influential study of *Fiction and the Reading Public*, made of despicable 'reading to prevent boredom', as opposed to favoured (because uncontaminated by massness) pre-industrial crafts and leisure pursuits:

But these had a real social life, they had a way of living that obeyed the natural rhythm and furnished them with genuine or what might be called, to borrow a word from the copy writer, 'creative' interests – country arts, traditional crafts and games and singing, not substitute or kill-time interests like listening to radio or gramophone, looking through newspapers and magazines, watching films and commercial football, and the activities connected with motor cars and bicycles, the only way of using leisure known to the modern city dweller. (Q.D. Leavis, 1965: 209)

It is hard not to concur with John Carey, who argued that 'the early twentieth century saw a determined effort, on the part of the European intelligentsia, to exclude the masses from culture' (Carey, 1992: 16–17). They did this partly by pouring scorn on popular culture itself – as Queenie Leavis, above; or else 'they could prevent them reading literature by making it too difficult for them to understand' – which was Carey's explanation for literary modernism! (16)

A further twist to this tale was that in due course the democratisation of higher education meant that increasing numbers of those who, because they rode bikes and read (or 'looked through') newspapers, aroused the ire of literary intellectuals, ended up at college trying to understand the criticisms and the literature of the intellectuals (including Tom Wolfe's 'sages of O'Hare'). That

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attempt necessarily included a lesson in despising their own practices and backgrounds. ‘Sweetness and light’ remained restricted to what Arnold’s ‘class of cultured men’ said it was. In practice, that new class judged the world adversely, in the name of a literary conversation from which the world for its part was more or less excluded. Laugh? They could have died.

Arnoldian cultural ideology was part of a larger movement of educational modernisation. Until the First World War (when it was conscripted into the war effort in opposition to German *Kultur*), both schools and universities were slow and reluctant to introduce the study of literature:

As long as English was studied only by working-class children, girls, Mechanics’ Institute apprentices and audiences for WEA [Workers’ Education Association] lectures, it remained a low-status subject, despised by the great public schools and universities (Mathieson: 43; see also 125–6 for universities)

This was the situation attacked by Arnold and his followers, especially Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch. Leavis took up the struggle, not to improve the status of mechanics, girls, workers and their children, but of English:

When Leavis . . . evolved what came to be recognisable as ‘Cambridge English’, he retained these earlier scholars’ sense of mission, ‘this sense of obligation’ to all levels of education and society, as well as to the furtherance of knowledge, and ‘faith in the saving effects of literature’. The two main characteristics of the men responsible for shaping the English Tripos, their belief in the critical method and their concern with the responsibility of education, have distinguished Cambridge English from 1913 through Leavis, to the contemporary work of disciples like David Holbrook and Fred Inglis. (Mathieson: 126–7)

The Cambridge approach was designed to reach ‘all levels of education and society’. In other words, it was thought capable of opening to the life of the imagination the minds of the children of ‘the masses’ and ‘the philistines’. But equally, it was held to be good for training future leaders and imperial administrators in literary judgement, not to make them into poets or novelists, but to mature their taste and judgement, the better to run the country, and indeed many other countries in a far-flung empire.

Popular culture – Shakespeare to jazz

The appeal to ‘critical method’ and ‘responsibility of education’ were also – and strangely enough – the authentic voice of cultural studies. Here’s one of its founding statements: ‘It is part of the purpose of education to cleanse the language’ (Hall and Whannel, 1964: 334):

Clearly, one of the great – perhaps tragic – characteristics of the modern age has been the progressive alienation of high art from popular art. Few art forms are able to hold

both elements together: and popular art has developed a history and a topography of its own, separate from high and experimental art. Nevertheless, the connection between the two cannot be denied. In some way difficult precisely to define, the vigour of popular art – whether communally or individually made – and the relevance of serious art are bound indissolubly together. So that when we look at the new media – especially those where the fragmentation between popular and serious art is not yet complete (like the cinema) – we are showing a proper concern, not only for the moments of quality in the popular arts, but for the condition and quality of imaginative work of *any* level, and thus for the quality of the culture as a whole. It is this care for the quality of the culture – rather than the manufacture and manipulation of levels of taste – which is the ultimate *educational* responsibility we try to focus here. (Hall and Whannel, 1964: 84–5)

‘Concern . . . for the quality of the culture as a whole’, seen as an ‘ultimate *educational* responsibility’, was Arnoldian ideology incarnate. Setting ‘imaginative work’ and ‘the quality of culture’ against the ‘manufacture and manipulation’ of ‘taste’ was the classic Leavisite gambit. Yet this passage was co-authored by Stuart Hall; it’s from his first book, *The Popular Arts*. Indeed the dust-jacket made the connection with cultural studies explicit: ‘Stuart Hall, formerly an editor of *New Left Review*, has recently been appointed Senior Research Fellow in the new Birmingham University Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies under Professor Richard Hoggart.’ The passage quoted above was the conclusion to Part I: ‘Definitions’. It could certainly be taken as part of the *manifesto* for academic-educational cultural studies.

Hall and Whannel were unusual in seeking to address the importance of ‘holding together’ popular and high arts. Arnoldian and Leavisite analysts would find it easy to agree that ‘one of the great – perhaps tragic – characteristics of the modern age has been the progressive alienation of high art from popular art’. Where Hall and Whannel departed from the script was in their ‘concern for the condition and quality of imaginative work of *any* level’. Indeed, they were prepared to invoke Shakespeare, normally used in this context to demonstrate the ‘alienation’ bit of the argument; i.e. both that Shakespeare’s genius was of a different order from that of the popular arts of the day, and that the mob-like populace were incapable of appreciating Shakespeare.

But here was an argument within the Arnoldian tradition about the *value* of popular art and the *quality* of popular entertainments. To make their point Hall and Whannel invoked the great mid-twentieth-century scholar of Shakespeare’s audience, Alfred Harbage, who as an American was OK about both Shakespeare and democracy. In fact, Harbage had much more invested in Shakespeare’s *popularity* than in his *alienation* from the populace:

Shakespeare and his audience found each other, in a measure they created each other. He was a quality writer for a quality audience. . . . The great Shakespearian discovery was that quality extended vertically through the social scale, not horizontally at the upper genteel, economic and academic levels. ALFRED HARBAGE, *As They Liked It*. (Cited thus in Hall and Whannel, 1964: 66)

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Although Hall and Whannel had departed radically from the Arnoldian script, they were very much still in the same overall argument. For what was at stake for them in 1964 was exactly the same as what had motivated Arnold in 1869, almost a century earlier. It was the connection between culture and government, or culture and politics. The gap between literate elites and 'the masses' was seen in adversarial, i.e. political terms, rather than by means of some other relational metaphor (family resemblance, for instance). This was because they thought that the 'vertical' integration of quality that Harbage found in Shakespeare had been severed: that was the 'tragic' characteristic of the 'modern age'. Thus they saw the only connection between contemporary popular and high culture as dissociation or 'alienation'. Understood this way, it was still almost impossible to imagine any relationship between elites and masses that was not seen as a struggle. But the masses could never be self-represented as such, only spoken for by those who desired to improve or lead them or who feared their ungovernability. It followed that the struggle was to maintain the supremacy of high culture, conducted by literary intellectuals who saw their own reading practices as the foundation of government, and culture.

No one seemed to take on the really radical implication of Harbage's statement that Shakespeare 'wrote for a quality audience' and was reciprocally a creation of it. *Shakespeare's* great discovery was that quality extended vertically through the social scale. If it was true for Shakespeare, why could it not be true for 'the modern age'? Would an investigation of mass culture reveal *quality* in both text and audience? This was a question that the (Arnold/Leavis/Hall) struggle branch of cultural studies could not ask, much less answer.

How did cultural studies deal with the contents of popular culture? As might have been expected, what was seen depended on the stance of the observer. What did the various positions have to say about popular music, for instance? Writing of Wyndham Lewis, 'the intellectuals' intellectual', John Carey reported on Lewis's 1929 book *Paleface: The Philosophy of the Melting-Pot*. Ostensibly a critique of 'the cult of the Negro and the primitive among educated whites', it was in fact a double attack on Black and 'mass' culture, each condemned, as Lewis saw it, for displaying the characteristics of the other. Lewis's racist language was intemperate and untrammelled, but the *hatred* was for the mass. As Carey put it:

The Negro's gift to the white world is jazz, which Lewis interprets as 'the aesthetic medium of a sort of frantic proletarian subconscious'. . . . In fact [the blacks'] sole contribution to culture is 'a barbarous, melancholy, epileptic folk-music, worthy of a patagonian cannibal'. Jazz, as developed in the West, is for Lewis unmistakably degraded and degrading, expressing the mindless energy of the mass. It is the 'slum peasant' and the 'city serf' that rejoice in its 'gross proletarian nigger bumps'. Its 'idiot mass sound' is ultimately 'marxistic'. (Carey, 1992: 194-5)

Writing in 1964, Stuart Hall and Paddy Whannel took more seriously those 'marxistic' tendencies. Addressing schoolteachers, they used jazz to distinguish among the terms popular, mass and high culture:

The distinction between popular and mass art will be clearer if we take an example of the difference between a popular artist and a mass performer in their attitudes towards their audience and their work. Both are more 'aware' of their audience than the high artist. But whereas the popular artist, feeling his audience in his bones, concentrates everything on making anew and creating, the mass artist seems to be in total subjection to his audience, nervously aware of it, desperately afraid of losing touch. (Hall and Whannel, 1964: 70)

Hall and Whannel went on to contrast the statements of some prominent jazz musicians with those of Liberace, and they found Liberace wanting. The line between jazz players and Liberace, they concluded, 'is the crucial boundary between popular art and mass art' (72). The production of artistic quality from jazz meant that it no longer had to be 'popular' (well-liked) to qualify as 'popular music':

Jazz, of course, is a minority music. But it is popular in the sense of being *of the people*, and while it is no longer the exclusive property of a small, depressed and exploited community the link there has been miraculously preserved. The jazz ethos is still tolerant and non-conformist. Lively, radical and creative groups of young people in quite different cultures have, during the short period of its history, found in it a common, international language. It costs money to go to a jazz club or concert, and art galleries are usually free: but for many young people jazz is more available than the traditional art forms. (73)

Jazz here was indeed 'miraculous': it was praised for being 'available' – the one quality that the despised 'mass art' could really claim as its own. Jazz was minority, but popular; it was 'of the people', although not any more; it cost money, but was a public good. What it meant, and how it fitted into the cultural distinctions of popular, mass and high, was a matter of *critical interpretation* – which was itself the essence of jazz.

Jazz as criticism; Shakespeare as business studies

How could jazz 'be both what it is and another thing'? Terence Hawkes, in his book *That Shakespeherian Rag*, had an answer to that problem that was as sophisticated as it was generous:

We have only to step beyond the shores of Europe to encounter quite a different notion of interpretation that will allow . . . the sense of a text as . . . an arena of conflicting and often contradictory potential interpretations. . . . The abstract model I reach for is of course that of jazz music: that black American challenge to the Eurocentric idea of the author's, or the composer's, authority. . . . Interpretation in that context is not parasitic but symbiotic in its relationship with its object. Its role is not limited to the service, or the revelation, or the celebration of the author's/composer's art. Quite the reverse: interpretation *constitutes* the art of the jazz musician. (Hawkes, 1986: 117–18)

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Terry Hawkes – himself a jazz drummer well known around the pubs and clubs of South Wales – did not introduce lightly this figure of jazz as criticism. Taking his cue from ‘Geoffrey Hartman’s conceit that, as a native American confection, with its unsettling commitment to creative re-presentation and re-interpretation, jazz offers a model for a future notion of literary criticism’ (Hawkes, 1986: 125), he wrote:

Criticism is the major, in its largest sense the *only* native American art. Complaints about America’s lack of original creativity in the arts miss the point. Responding to, improvising on, ‘playing’ with, re-creating, synthesizing and interpreting ‘given’ structures of all kinds, political, social, aesthetic, these have historically constituted the transatlantic mode in our century and before it, to an extent that might now force us to recognize that criticism makes Americans of us all. (Hawkes, 1986: 118)

Hawkes’s main business was neither jazz nor America, though he was interested in literary criticism and cultural studies. He too was concerned with the relations between popular and high culture. Unusually, for a Shakespearean scholar, his view of that relation was notably jazzy – he saw the *elevation* of Shakespeare from popular and oral culture to high literary art as diminishing, even a *decline*:

From a position as a major instance of English-speaking popular culture, they [the plays of Shakespeare] have over 400 years dwindled to become the exemplars of internationally revered high art. From their function as oral externalization of the tensions within their own culture, they have shrunk to be sacred written texts. (Hawkes, 1986: 86)

How right he was. And how topsy-turvy had the world of cultural politics become. For here was a prominent professor of English praising popular culture and using words like ‘dwindled’ and ‘shrunk’ to describe its canonisation into high art.

But his suspicion of international reverence for sacralised ‘holy writ’ was right on the money. The ‘Shakespeare effect’ eventually reached the *Harvard Business Review (HBR)*, normally a focused and sober journal of ‘executive education’ from the Harvard Graduate School of Business. But in May 2001 it featured an interview with literary critic Harold Bloom, under the title of ‘A Reading List for Bill Gates – and You’ (*HBR*, 2001). The list contained but four items (though of course one of them included quite a few unnamed sub-items; plays, poems and the like):

- **Shakespeare:** complete works,
- **Cervantes:** *Don Quixote*,
- **Emerson:** *Essays* (six were named),
- **Freud:** *Psychopathology of Everyday Life*.

For Shakespeare, Bloom was in full reverential mode:

Everything we could possibly want to know about ourselves we can find in Shakespeare. He invented himself so brilliantly that he invents all the rest of us. He is at once the best, the most original, the strongest cognitive and aesthetic writer there has ever been, in any language. And yet he's also an entertainer. (HBR: 64)

Worried that not all executives would get Shakespeare in quite this way, HBR asked Bloom a pertinent question:

HBR: To learn from literature, it seems as if you must be a 'good' reader. Yet not everyone can recognize in Shakespeare or Cervantes what you see. What can you tell our readers about how to read well?

Bloom: There's no single right way to read well. . . . I do, however, believe it is possible to teach people to read better, and that's ultimately by measuring one work against another, though the judgement is probably best left implicit. Nowadays, the best standard for making these judgements is Shakespeare. There is no other standard really available to us in English. (HBR, 65)

The logic of that dialogue was: Question: How to 'read Shakespeare well'? Answer: Read Shakespeare. What Bill Gates made of this lazy tautological advice was not recorded, but Bloom had not finished. He had views on popular culture too.

Popular art is certainly an extraordinary achievement. Unfortunately, there are no popular artists in the United States today. That's because the country has no sense of irony. . . . Great literature, by contrast, is nearly always ironic. Shakespeare was the master ironist of all times. (HBR: 66)

Apparently without irony, *Harvard Business Review* editor Suzy Wetlaufer ran an editorial in the same issue on this topic ('Open-Book Management, Revised'. HBR: 12). While it was generally supportive of Bloom, on the grounds that 'his reading list prompted more than the usual amount of debate among HBR's staff', it closed with this: 'I should add that some editors raised red flags for managers seeking edification through literature. In a word, they said, "Don't."'

'Because literature concerns itself with the ambiguities of the human condition, it stands as a threat to the vitality of the business executive, who must at all times maintain a bias towards action', explains executive editor Nick Carr, who happens to hold a master's in literature from Harvard. 'It is far safer to stick with throwaway thrillers, which at least provide a distraction from the stresses of the day. Forget the deep stuff. Read anything by Tom Clancey, Robert Ludlum, or Jeffrey Archer.' And while you're at it, read HBR too. (HBR: 12)

It seemed the culture wars were not over: Bloom wanted culture ethnically cleansed, as it were, of all but pure Shakespeare; the executive editor thought literature might affect the 'vitality' of decision-making people of action. Here was a banal form of the 'alienation' of high from popular culture: a literary critic not giving a damn about American business people's cultural specificity (whatever

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the question, the answer was Shakespeare) vs. an editor too concerned with that specificity (vitality, action, stress), with no faith in the 'deep stuff'.

The idea that there might be anything *in common* between Shakespeare and contemporary authors of popular fiction seemed to occur to neither side. Alfred Harbage's democratising insight of the 1940s had been forgotten. It will be recalled that Harbage wrote that Shakespeare 'was a quality writer for a quality audience. The great Shakespearian discovery was that quality extended vertically through the social scale, not horizontally at the upper genteel, economic and academic levels' (cited in Hall and Whannel, 1964: 66). With Bloom, 'quality' narrowed rather than broadened. Now there was no extension of it even horizontally between the 'economic' and 'academic' levels, never mind vertically between 'masses' and 'classes'. Harbage's heroic imaginative optimism about the national scope of popular Elizabethan theatre as 'a democratic institution in an intensely undemocratic age' (Harbage 1941: 11), had dwindled (using Hawkes's word) to the spectacle of a pissed-off literary critic using the name of Shakespeare to piss in business's swimming pool.

This loss of faith in the democracy of quality represented the last gasp of the *struggle* school of thought. But Harbage's *democratisation* strand of thinking had nevertheless, and meanwhile, remained influential within cultural studies. As has been noted above, Hall and Whannel were clearly on the side of jazz as a popular but serious art, and they wrote too of new media where 'the fragmentation between popular and serious art is not yet complete (like the cinema)' (1964: 84–5). This strand of thinking, in other words, was still, despite misgivings about commercial or mass culture, willing to look for Shakespearean quality in the works – and the audiences – of popular culture.

'Cardiff School' cultural studies

An early proponent of this way of looking at things was S.L. Bethell, University College Cardiff (later Cardiff University) during and after the Second World War. Incidentally, here was a direct line of intellectual filiation that has not been recorded in the standard cultural studies genealogies (but see Turner, 1990: 83). Bethell taught Moelwyn Merchant, who taught Terry Hawkes, who taught me. Bethell taught at Cardiff in the 1940s and 1950s, Terry Hawkes for virtually his whole career (mid-1950s to late 1990s), me in the twilight years of the twentieth century (1996–2000). Merchant taught at Exeter, though his connection to Cardiff was heartfelt. As for me, I thought it was a fitting recognition of the intellectual movements described in this chapter that I rejoined an English department where as a student I could not study what I was now appointed to profess.

But in fact the organisational entity didn't really bespeak much intellectual integration. Indeed, Hawkes himself had been horrified when Journalism arrived in the English department during a period of managerial restructuring that had justified amalgamating English, Philosophy, Linguistics, Communication and

Journalism on the grounds that they were all 'about writing'. His fears seemed well founded when an enterprising journalism student wrote a rather unflattering pen portrait of some of the critical luminaries in English (notably Catherine Belsey), which was prominently published by the *Mail on Sunday*, a middle-brow national tabloid newspaper, despite a number of professorial protestations about being interviewed under false pretences. By the time I arrived, the two sections were barely on speaking terms, and soon afterwards the unwieldy English department split. I headed a new School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies. Even this proved to be controversial – Kate Belsey and others argued that as a critical practice the name 'Cultural Studies' should not be used as an institutional title, and in any case it belonged in the Critical Theory section of English: the journos were welcome to their own school but would they kindly leave cultural studies where they had found it? In the event, cultural studies went with media and journalism, and some of its genealogy was lost. The new school professed cultural studies, but its official ancestor figure was not Bethell or Hawkes, who retired the same year; it was Tom Hopkinson, wartime Editor of *Picture Post* and first journalism professor at Cardiff, and indeed in the UK, in the 1970s. In this case cultural studies had migrated away from the imaginative textual system of modernity (literature), towards its realist textual system (journalism) (see Hartley, 1996).

In 1944 Bethell published *Shakespeare and the Popular Dramatic Tradition*. In it he propounded a new thesis, designed to counter the supremacy of classicism, rationalism, naturalism and realism in highbrow theatre since the Restoration. He proposed 'that a popular audience, uncontaminated by abstract and tendentious dramatic theory, will attend to several diverse aspects of a situation, simultaneously yet without confusion' (Bethell, 1944: 28). He called this the 'principle of multi-consciousness' (29). He explained the concept by reference to the popular drama of his own time, 'music-hall, pantomime, revue, and musical comedy, together with the average purely commercial Hollywood film' (24–5).

Where the Victorian critic laughs, he must love; but a popular audience is never under this necessity. . . . The modern cinema-goer has a similar adaptability. . . . A pair of lovers steal away from the company, discover a convenient garden seat, and, after some preliminary conversation, break into a love-duet, to the accompaniment of an unseen orchestra. Even those little conversant with the etiquette of high society must be aware that this is an unusual method of proposing marriage. . . . In this instance, story is accepted as story, and song as song; simultaneously yet without confusion. (Bethell, 1944: 27–8)

The point of Bethell's argument was not simply to insist upon the technical niceties of theatrical performance in an era of Bradleyan psychological and scenic naturalism, nor to remind critics that Shakespeare's own audiences must needs have retained 'dual awareness of play-world and real world' (27). His argument was much more ambitious. He wanted to demonstrate that 'a

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flourishing drama is the epiphenomenon of a flourishing and organic national culture' (29).

The implication of such a claim, in the unprecedentedly belligerent 1940s, where national survival was not assured for all combatants, and where rationalist calculations were responsible for dehumanising policies including those that led to the Holocaust, not to mention carpet bombing by the Allies of mass civilian targets in Germany, was that nations had better attend to their drama if they valued their nationhood. In particular, the Arnoldian intellectual tradition that hated or despised the masses for their culture and sought to exclude them from national culture (as Carey argued) was courting much more serious disaster than its petty snobbishness seemed to indicate. The cultural exclusion of the popular masses was intrinsically a dehumanising gesture. To argue in the opposite direction from within the overall framework of mid-century intellectual assumptions was unusual, perhaps unique, but this was Bethell's project. He sought to explain what was needed for a national culture to 'flourish', and he found it not in intellectual culture but in the *popular dramatic tradition* itself. His urge was towards inclusiveness, to learn from popular audiences and arts.

Bethell argued that national culture had fractured during the 'cultural revolution' of the seventeenth century. The political Restoration of Charles II in 1660 masked a 'cultural cleavage' between the court and the 'nation' (Bethell, 1951: 100), which was thereby already beginning to take on the characteristic of excluded 'mass'. But as the age of reason took hold among 'court' and governmental circles, something of the 'flourishing national culture' remained in popular drama:

As Heaven grew inaccessible, man shrank in importance. . . . Neo-classicism next gave way to naturalism; the last citadel of human dignity fell before the march of mind; and man became 'a poor, bare, forked animal' indeed, though with a complicated pre-natal history. Only the popular mind, as revealed in the popular theatre, preserved in crude melodrama something of the ancient wonder, and a sense that man is not himself an adequate cause of his own remarkable history. On this, if on anything, the future of the drama – as of any social decency – must ultimately depend. (Bethell, 1944: 83)

The 'future of the drama' and of 'social decency' alike, from this perspective, would depend on contemporary vehicles for the conveyance of 'multi-consciousness', of 'the ancient wonder', and of a sense of humanity's inadequacy as the cause of its own history. Bethell made much of the connection between contemporary cinema and Elizabethan drama. Movies were explicitly cast in the role of that hope for the future:

The mixture of comic and tragic in Shakespeare is too obvious to require elucidation by modern instances, but it is interesting to observe that Hollywood preserves this aspect of the popular tradition. Passages of pure farce, stylised and non-naturalistic, still occur in quite serious drama; and devotees of the detective film (or the detective novel) will remember the impossibly comic and ineffective policeman who may

obtrude into scenes of violent death and sudden bereavement. This sort of thing is often censured by the film critics whose correct 'high seriousness' requires unity of tone. Any survival, however, in the slick world of commercial entertainment, at least suggests a hope that beneath the polished coating of *ersatz* art, genuine artistic qualities may lurk, perhaps to emerge in better times. (1944: 112)

This passage was published in 1944, towards the climax of the biggest armed conflict in world history, even though the villain of the piece still seemed to be 'ersatz art' rather than buzz-bombs and mass destruction (coolly, Reverend Bethell went so far as to give bad art a German adjective). But more seriously Bethell, who was by and large a convinced Leavisite (T.S. Eliot wrote the introduction to his book), was nevertheless obliged by his own analysis to look for hope not in Shakespeare directly, but in his *audience*, and within the lowest forms of contemporary mass art. Hope came from the 'popular dramatic tradition' whose contemporary manifestation wasn't high modernist literature at all but the 'slick world of commercial entertainment'.

There wasn't long to wait – 'better times' were round the corner, and with them emerged, pretty much directly from the 'slick world of commercial entertainment', a new vehicle for popular drama, and thence a new hope for the future of a flourishing national culture. It was television.

Terence Hawkes was the first Shakespearean critic of any stature – perhaps the first of all, period – to claim in a serious way that television was 'a fundamentally dramatic medium and – dare I say it – a fundamentally Shakespearean one' (Hawkes, 1969: 125). In 1967 he wrote two articles, 'Stamp Out Live Theatre' and 'Drama in Camera', which started life as radio talks on the BBC Third Programme and were published to considerable controversy in its weekly magazine *the Listener* (1 June 1967: 711–12; and 8 June 1967: 743–4). They were reprinted with added material in his book *Shakespeare's Talking Animals* (Hawkes, 1973: 215–41). Citing Bethell directly on television and its audience's 'multi-consciousness' (221), Hawkes argued that television was the 'true heir' of Elizabethan theatre:

[The Elizabethan theatre's] audiences, and its plays, were genuinely 'popular'; the result of an amalgam of the elements of the culture, and an artistically honest 'projection' of it. When that amalgam disintegrated, the 'universality' which can be felt in the plays vanished. . . . Its absence forcefully imposes itself when we place the plays of the Restoration beside those of the Elizabethan and Jacobean theatre. That theatre can never be reproduced, but its true heir in our culture can only be television. Television constitutes the only really 'national' theatre our society is likely to have. (1973: 231).

Hawkes thought that television's 'persistent omission from the realm of scholarly discussion and analysis . . . by now almost occasions embarrassment'. 'That television connects vitally, formatively, and numerically with our own society in ways that the theatre can no longer hope to match is a situation that mockingly devalues the standard academic disdain which the medium encounters' (1973: 4). He concluded that:

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Finally, to take a broader view, television serves, as all communal art does, to confront a society with itself. That may be said to be the ultimate purpose of drama. . . . For our society, in contrast to that of Elizabethan England, is a dispersed and diffracted one, in which unity tends rarely to be a felt actuality. The effect of television on such a society proves at once diagnostic and remedial. . . . Television's most significant quality, then, is also the one for which our society has most need. It manifests itself as the general ability to bring otherwise disparate entities together; to create unity; to impose wholeness on life. (240)

That approach to television concatenated directly into my first book, co-authored with John Fiske: *Reading Television* (Fiske and Hartley, 1978). Our book cited Bethell, Hawkes, and even Shakespeare, within its first few pages (13–16). It was published as one of the first four titles in the New Accents series, of which Terry Hawkes was general editor. It dubbed television 'bardic' (85–100). It was the first book-length treatment of television from a textual and cultural point of view. It was perhaps the only book of its time, in the UK at least (Horace Newcomb was doing similar things in the USA), to take TV as it found it, without seeking to pathologise its supposed effects. The book sought not to chastise TV on behalf of externally applied values, but instead tried to apply analytical techniques, derived from linguistics and semiotics as well as literary and social criticism, which would account for its cultural form and popular reach. It seemed to answer an analytical need: it sold strongly in the UK, USA and around the world, was still in print more than twenty years later, and had also been translated into Chinese, Croatian, Danish, Greek, Japanese, Polish and Romanian.

Liberating culture – liveness or television?

Raymond Williams was known in English departments less for his work in *New Left Review* than for his first book, *Drama from Ibsen to Eliot* (literary modernist theatre), published in 1952, and revised in 1968 to include *Drama from Ibsen to Brecht* (leftist modernist theatre) (Williams, 1968). Williams was appointed as King Edward VII Professor of Drama at Cambridge in 1974. In his inaugural lecture, 'Drama in a Dramatised Society', he made a Hawkesian connection between drama, society and television: 'most dramatic performances are now in film and television studios'. Through TV, 'drama, in quite new ways, is built into the rhythms of everyday life'. Analysing drama proved to be 'effective not only as a way of seeing certain aspects of society but as a way of getting through to some of the fundamental conventions which we group as society itself' (Williams, in O'Connor (ed), 1989: 11). It followed, of course, that to analyse television was to analyse 'society itself'.

Williams had in fact prefigured this move at the very end of *Drama from Ibsen to Brecht*. In 400 pages that book steadfastly held its gaze to the modernist, literary, 'serious drama', written for minority theatre but perhaps more widely read

than *attended* (certainly reading was Williams's own first encounter with it, on his return from wartime service in 1945; see Williams, 1968: 2). Film and television were never mentioned (nor were popular theatrical forms) until, in the last couple of pages, they emerged, almost as a *deus ex machina*, to resolve the 'difficulties' into which modernist naturalist theatre had got itself:

In method, film and television offer certain real solutions to many of the recurrent problems of modern dramatic form, though in practice, in ordinary use, they often simply repeat some familiar deadlocks. At the same time, these potentially liberating media, which have already released certain newly mobile forms, are often, by habit, still treated as inferior. They may get audiences, but the important work, it is felt, is still in the culturally warranted form: the theatre, where drama happens, as opposed to film and television, where entertainment happens. I do not know any real country in which this comparison can be seriously made. . . . As a cultural convention, however, the contrast persists. (Williams, 1968: 399–400)

Williams signed off from modernist literary drama with a promise: 'I shall try, in a later essay, to connect the history of modern drama, in its theatrical forms, with the already major achievement of modern film drama, and the already interesting achievement of television drama' (1968: 401). That attempt bore fruit not only in 'Drama in a Dramatised Society', (in O'Connor, 1989), but also in Williams's book *Television: Technology and Cultural Form*, both of which were published in 1974.

But just as Williams was penning the last pages of *Drama from Ibsen to Brecht* in 1968, that year of imagined revolutions, Terence Hawkes was getting what was coming to him. The blast came from Kenneth Tynan, firebrand critic for the *Observer* (9 June 1968), who denounced Hawkes's views on live theatre as published in the *Listener* of the previous year (see above). Apparently Hawkes had neglected the revolutionary potential of the 'living event'; the 'dangerous electricity' of live performance that even dictators feared. Speaking the following month (July 1968) at a conference in Canada, Hawkes allowed himself the luxury of a reply (Hawkes, 1969: 124–5). He noted that the latest theatrical productions – as evidenced by theatre criticism in the *Observer* alongside Tynan's piece – were '*Hedda Gabler* (1890), Galsworthy's *The Foundations* (1917), Clifford Odet's *Golden Boy* (1937, with music added) and Ivor Novello's *The Dancing Years* (1939)'. Commented Hawkes:

I will accept that these works do in fact constitute the 'living events' that can create a 'dangerous electricity' in the experience of . . . Tynan and others of our well-bred revolutionaries. No doubt such things disturb and astonish them. But perhaps we ought to consider the possibility that large numbers of people find a more adequate and disturbing contact with living events through another kind of electricity. In the week that the London theatres shuddered under the impact of *The Dancing Years*, millions whose fate had denied them contact with such living events saw Robert Kennedy murdered, the latest act in a tragedy of truly Shakespearean proportions, before their eyes, in their 'living' rooms, on television. (Hawkes, 1969: 125)

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The intellectual 'habit' of denigrating popular culture and mass media was seriously damaging to intellectual credibility. Kenneth Tynan's defence of live theatre, like Harold Bloom's defence of Shakespeare, looked risible and bathetic when compared with the much larger contemporary culture that they couldn't see right under the noses down which they looked. As John Carey later argued:

It is evident that for the majority of people television has immensely extended the opportunity for knowledge. It has also given the majority, in Britain at least, unprecedented access to traditional culture, not only through such star ventures as . . . the BBC Shakespeare series, but through countless everyday drama productions and documentaries. It is almost certainly true to say that thanks to television, the proportion of the British population that has actually seen drama performed is greater than in any previous age. Following this trend, 'culture' has made itself more widely available in other respects too. (Carey, 1992: 214)

This was just what lent most emotional force to the intellectual dislike of popular/mass media: they 'created an alternative culture which bypassed the intellectual and made him redundant' (Carey: 6).

However, there was a sting in the tail of this analysis for cultural studies, since it was just as much an heir to intellectual traditions as it was committed to serious exploration of mass or popular media. John Carey – not one to use tact when a well swung sock-full-of-sand to the temple would do – made the point:

The new availability of culture through television and other popular media has driven intellectuals to evolve an anti-popular cultural mode that can reprocess all existing culture and take it out of the reach of the majority. This mode, variously called 'post-structuralism' or 'deconstruction' or just 'theory', began in the 1960s. . . . Whereas television must ensure that it can be understood by a wide and not necessarily highly educated audience, 'theory' must ensure that it cannot. (215)

In other words, cultural studies was in danger of repeating the same dehumanising, anti-popular manoeuvres that Carey had already castigated in the intelligentsia of the first half of the twentieth century.

But this was the same cultural studies that had learnt its poststructuralist ABC from a little primer called *Structuralism and Semiotics*, by none other than Terence Hawkes in his own New Accents series. Of course Hawkes was forewarned of the possibility that this might not go down well. The opening sentence of the book read: 'To the average speaker of English, terms such as "structure", "structuralist" and "structuralism" seem to have an abstract, complex, new-fangled and possibly French air about them: a condition traditionally offering uncontested grounds for the profoundest mistrust'. Hawkes tried to sound reassuring: the concepts were 'not entirely alien to our trusted ways of thinking, nor did they spring, fully formed with horns and tail, out of the sulphurous Parisian atmosphere of the last decade' (Hawkes, 1977: 11).

In such a context, where new things needed to be said in new ways, and neither native intelligibility nor its Frenchified opposite was any guarantee of virtue

(or its opposite), cultural studies could act as a *mediating* discourse between vernacular and intellectual cultures. Hawkes's book concluded with the view that structuralism was useful for exploring (in Jonathan Culler's words), 'the problems of articulating a world'. Hawkes wrote: 'How we articulate our world determines . . . how we arrive at what we call reality. There could be no more crucial objective for any discipline' (1977: 160). Far from dehumanising and excluding, this vision of intellectual work was 'mediating', like the media themselves.

Carey's enthusiastic denunciation of postmodernist intellectuals on the grounds that they had inherited the prejudices if not the project of their modernist forebears, was not without force. Cultural studies, like its literary and sociological neighbours, was by no means exempt from hatred of the mass. There was real *intellectual* work to do to emancipate intellectual 'articulations of the world' themselves from what had already been dubbed in 1968 by Williams the indefensible 'habit' of treating 'potentially liberating media' as 'inferior'. There was a default setting, as it were, which allowed each new intake of cultural activists to oppose, for no other reason than its popularity, the most popular form or mode of culture. More always meant worse.

But that was no reason to abandon the attempt to 'mediate'. Meaghan Morris, in fact, put this activity at the centre of cultural studies' long term agenda:

Critics work primarily as mediators – writers, readers, image producers, teachers – in a socially as well as theoretically obscure zone of values, opinion, belief and emotion. If we can and do become involved in broader social and economic struggles, whatever political effectivity we might claim for *critical* work can be registered, most of the time, only by gradual shifts in what people take to be thinkable and do-able in relation to particular circumstances in time, place, and space. (Morris, 1998a: 226)

Perhaps as a result, Morris characterised as 'absurd' a habit inherited from the 'English' traditions examined in this chapter:

All the same, it does seem hard for cultural studies as, let's say, an ethos, a collectively shaped disposition, to throw off the megalomaniacal idea inherited from 'English' that a training in reading can and does form a caste of total subjects . . . fit to administer a nation or even the world. Few critics would want to avow such an absurd aspiration. (Morris 1998a: 228)

Impossible to avow; hard to throw off. The reduction of 'reading well' from a *governmental* ('megalomaniacal') to a *media* ('mediating') practice was a long term project of cultural studies in its 'democratising' if not its 'struggle' guise. It was no more than a recognition that cultural studies lived in the 'obscure zone' of both teaching and values, both reading and emotion, both writing and belief. But it was also a recognition that the popular, mass media lived in the same zone. It required a 'gradual shift' not only in what people took to be 'thinkable and do-able', but also in what intellectuals thought about the media.

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Meaghan Morris, like Bethell and Hawkes, found hope for the future in mass art. She wrote: 'The intellectual fantasy of control historically invested in vanguardist thinking about the future – the manifesto, the utopian programme, that great book to change the course of history – may itself become obsolete'. She went on:

I quite like that idea. Classical utopian writing depresses me profoundly, and my idea of an empowering vision of the future is the ending of *Terminator 2: Judgment Day*. But I doubt that the future is quite as open as that wonderful film suggests with its affirmation that freedom and responsibility are possible, not only in the fantasy futures by which we dream our opposition to regimes of grim necessity, but as real practices in the present of an indeterminate and unpredictable historical time. (1998a: 232)

There could hardly be a more 'classic' instance of mass, commercial art than Arnold Schwarzenegger's second *Terminator* movie. So what was 'wonderful' about James Cameron's box-office sensation of 1991? Was it, as the *Oxford History of World Cinema* (especially the chapter by Joseph Sartelle, 1996) surmised, because *Terminator 2: Judgment Day*:

- starred Arnold Schwarzenegger as **idol**: 'throughout most of the world, Hollywood film-makers and stars, such as Steven Spielberg and Arnold Schwarzenegger, have become the cultural idols of a generation' (Nowell-Smith, 1996: 483)?
- was directed by James Cameron as a 'machine-made box-office **blockbuster** star vehicle'?
- had 'extremely fast **pace** and its emphasis on **plot** over character' (516)?
- 'was **dark**, brutally and routinely **violent**, and preoccupied with issues of sheer survival'?
- 'played for both **comic and sentimental** effect the subplot in which the white male killing machine is re-educated to be a responsible, protective caretaker. But just when the Terminator has been reformed enough to understand why people cry, he insists that he must be destroyed if the world is to be saved. The film thus suggested that his identity was too closely tied to his origins as a killer; something which even sensitivity training could not overcome. In short, like so many films of its time, *Terminator* was a meditation on the problem of the white man'?
- was an ideological fantasy 'about the relationship of the **American nation** to the realities and implications of its own recent history'; 'on the one hand America's traumatic experience of defeat in Vietnam, and on the other by the emergence of newly militant demands by women and "minorities" (racial, ethnic, and sexual) for greater representation and equality at all levels of American society and culture'?
- starred Arnold Schwarzenegger as **camp mannerist**: 'Like Madonna, Schwarzenegger embodies the fantasy of success. This self-made man has literally crafted his own body to fit the appetites of the culture industry. . . .

Like Madonna, Schwarzenegger's charm derives in part from a self-mocking humour which in no way detracts from the appeal of his exaggerated masquerade of gender'?

- represented a 'more complicated response to **feminism**' as one of 'what might be called "women-with-guns" movies, such as *Aliens* . . . *Terminator 2*, *Blue Steel*, and *The Silence of the Lambs*,' which were 'meditations on the unstable nature of gender roles and identification in American culture during this period?
- a 'festishization of the victim': 'even in movies like . . . the two *Terminator* films, in which the bodies of the male action heroes are fused with hard metal machinery, the narrative emphasizes the hero's capacity for **suffering**: he is shot, stabbed, crushed, dismembered, burned, or otherwise tortured' (Nowell-Smith, 1996: 514–22)?

It could only be concluded that something with so much potential for 'meditating' on the most important issues of personal, national, racial, gender and sexual identity currently in circulation, to which a popular and global audience could respond 'multi-consciously', was working for its society in the very way that Shakespeare's plays did for his.