

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

tics of Writing [Manchester UP, 1987] 301). Cultural studies ought to demonstrate just how full a life the literary has in popular culture, a project that will often require building from sources and incidents beneath the notice of scholars—the citation of Graham Greene in a biography of the Sex Pistols, for example. The primary problem with much of the academic work identified with cultural studies simply because it makes forays into mass culture is that it does not reconsider the disciplinary terrain. In a scathing review of psychoanalytic and post-structuralist interpretations of Madonna, Daniel Harris points out that in “spurning the pieties lavished on the canon, academics demonstrate how incomplete the post-modern break with traditional forms of artistic analysis has been, how abysmally they have failed to take popular culture on its own terms” (“Make My Rainy Day,” *Nation* 8 June 1992: 792).

As a result of academic careerism, cultural studies in the United States was conflated with postmodern theory, another trendy field, though a far more dominant one, and quickly became a bandwagon for academic leftists. Stuart Hall noted that “‘cultural studies’ has become an umbrella for just about anything” in American scholarship (“The Emergence of Cultural Studies,” *October* 53 [1990]: 22). University presses, for instance, are free in labeling their publications “literary and cultural studies.” Still worse, according to Barbara Epstein, chair of the History of Consciousness program at the University of California, Santa Cruz, cultural studies enacts what it’s supposed to be studying, the “fascination with being a celebrity” (Tom Frank, “Textual Reckoning,” *In These Times* 27 May 1996: 24). The audience that witnessed the cavalcade of cultural studies stars at the formative University of Illinois conference in 1990 was obsessed with preferment and aggrieved by neglect. One of the organizers of the conference, Lawrence Grossberg, who went on to coedit the proceedings and the journal *Cultural Studies*, effectively installing himself as the CEO of cultural studies in the United States, has argued that cultural studies needs to be crossed with the work of Gilles Deleuze and Michel Foucault (*We Gotta Get Out of This Place* [Routledge, 1992]). The result of this amalgamation with post-modern theory, Epstein observes, is that cultural studies has adopted the widespread poststructuralist silliness of insisting “that nothing is real, everything is a matter of appearances,” and of minimizing human agency (Frank 24). The occasion for her comments was the physicist Alan Sokal’s hoax on *Social Text*, an article baited with the thesis that physical reality is only “a social and linguistic construct” (“Transgressing the Boundaries—Toward a Transformative Hermeneutics of Quantum Gravity,” *Social Text* 14 [1996]: 217). Daniel Harris sim-

ilarly complains that postmodern theorists primarily promote their “most cherished tenet—that . . . there is no stable and empirically verifiable ‘reality’ behind the vagaries and impermanence of language” (793). This antimaterialism completely contradicts the original basis of cultural studies, the materialism exemplified by Raymond Williams and by the efforts of Birmingham mentors such as Richard Johnson to set out a “postpoststructuralist” view of agency that would acknowledge the power of ideology and other social constraints but also the human capacity to negotiate with them.

Considering the complete recasting of cultural studies in the United States, it is hardly surprising that Michael Bérubé would write that no one “really needs or wants to hear the Birmingham-Hoggart-Williams narrative” about the British origins of cultural studies (“Bite Size Theory,” *Social Text* 36 [1993]: 89). Donna Haraway, one of the best-known postmodern theorists associated with cultural studies in the United States, has said with perfect equanimity that cultural studies is about “everything and nothing” (Scott Heller, “Cultural Studies,” *Chronicle of Higher Education* 31 Jan. 1990: A4). That pretty well sums up why, a decade after the literary discovered cultural studies, *PMLA* is still wondering exactly what cultural studies is supposed to do.

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At Indiana University, graduate students in most humanities and social science disciplines can now “minor” in the fledgling Cultural Studies Program. The faculty members in the program represent twelve disciplines, from anthropology to telecommunications. The largest number are from English. Despite much faculty and student interest in cultural studies programs, creating one is an uphill struggle against existing disciplinary regimes. There aren’t many such programs—let alone departments—in North America today, even though many academics want to turn their disciplines, or at least their own teaching and research, toward cultural studies, because of what they see as the arbitrary narrowness of present disciplinary rules, procedures, and objects of study.

For “literary” disciplines (so the story goes), the source of our discontent has been “theory” (especially poststructuralism, Marxism, and feminism). But other forces are reshaping English departments in particular. One is the exponential increase of entire new literatures in English, produced in former British colonies (Australia, India, Nigeria, etc.) and in North America by ethnic “minorities” (African, Asian, and Native American, among others). The long struggle to include American literature in the