Chapter 17

European Cultural Studies

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In 1995 a series of texts were published aimed at addressing the issue of cultural studies in Europe. They were specifically designed as an "introduction" to the area of study and each volume dealt with a specific geographical region – Spanish Cultural Studies, German Cultural Studies, French Cultural Studies, and so on. These texts came at a time when government agencies, politicians, administrators, and intellectuals were attempting to redefine the debates about the "New Europe." This redefinition was grounded in an understanding that culture could no longer be given lip-service in relation to European development, and needed to be placed center-stage with a policy-driven agenda.

An examination of these texts provides an insight into the difficulties associated with creating a cultural studies platform that will allow the different meanings of culture in the European context to be facilitated. *A Dictionary of Cultural and Critical Theory* (Payne 1996), for example, argues that cultural studies in western Europe is associated with departments of English and equates it with other, more established terms such as the French *civilisation*, the Scandinavian *civilisation*, and the German *Landeskunde*. The overview concludes that while there are large numbers of people involved in cultural studies work across Europe, it is evident that such work "remains the poor relation to study of language and literature, lacking space in the curriculum, status in the eyes of most professional staff, and an explicit theoretical and disciplinary space" (Payne 1996: 186).

The focus on the development of cultural studies within particular national contexts by these texts was clearly, then, prescient. Each volume opened with an introduction that set out the breadth of the task involved in developing an identifiable cultural studies dimension within the established cultural histories of the various nations. Hence Rob Burns, writing about German cultural studies, analyzed the development of cultural studies in Britain, drawing a distinction between aesthetic and anthropological definitions of culture and foregrounding Williams' conception of culture as a "whole way of life." This tradition is set against the "Critical Theory" writings of Adorno and Horkheimer and it is this

Frankfurt School which is seen as the main impetus for the study of culture in Germany. Burns concludes that the text attempts, therefore, "to reconcile the two paradigms of 'culturalism' (with its emphasis on cultural practice as constitutive and empowering) and the 'culture industry' (with its focus on a consensus mass culture saturated with imposed meaning)" (Burns 1995: 7).

In the introduction to the French volume Michael Kelly argues that the key issue for cultural studies in France is one of identity, and that identity in French culture is articulated through the cumulative interaction of class, gender, and nation. He concludes that "the richness and multiplicity of its cultural discourses are a guarantee that it will continue to find powerful and vivid ways of articulating new identities. And for this reason French culture is a precious resource not only for France, but also for others who are willing to listen" (Forbes & Kelly 1995: 7).

Finally, in the Spanish volume, Helen Graham and Jo Labanyi offer a definition of culture which involves "both lived practices and artefacts or performances" (Graham & Labanyi 1995: 5), and this definition is used to develop a synopsis of the major thrusts in Spanish culture from the mid-1800s to the present day. It is at the beginning of the synopsis, however, that the crucial question for all of these texts is posed: "The starting point of any volume that claims to have as its aim the establishment of Spanish cultural studies as a discipline must be to ask why the discipline has been so slow to develop" (Graham & Labanyi 1995: 1).

The answer is partly to be found in the main body of each of these volumes. Rather than offering analysis of cultural studies as everyday lived experience each volume offers a historical overview of the development of culture in each nation. The importance of cultural movements is set against the crucial political events of the period in question, and each volume is similar in its assumption that European culture equates with some undefined notion of "high" culture. The Spanish volume does attempt to offer an analysis of popular music, television, cinema, and gay and lesbian culture, but other than these notable exceptions the only reference to popular culture throughout the texts is in general comment on the mass media or the threat of Americanization. The result is a body of work that offers the reader a *study of culture in Europe* rather than *a European cultural studies*.

Why No European Cultural Studies?

An analysis of these cultural studies texts offers an indication as to why a European cultural studies has been so slow to develop. While each volume presents a detailed and rich overview of the cultural developments in the selected area (and poses the key questions in relation to the creation of a wider cultural studies agenda, hence advancing the debate), the space to challenge accepted notions concerning cultural worth is hindered generally in Europe by four

underlying assumptions. The first is the assumption that cultural studies is an expression of national identity.

While all cultural behavior is destined to take place in some national context or other the majority of cultural studies research takes place at the local and regional levels and is interested in the ways in which people negotiate positions which often challenge and subvert national movements and concerns. The analysis of these negotiations was a major theme in the early work of the so-called Birmingham School, where subcultural behavior localized at street level was seen as an authentic expression of class resistance. Even when the "failings" of the reseachers working with the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies were exposed (lack of attention to gender and race in particular), the resultant studies still emphasized the importance of the local and regional over the national. In the postmodern environment the work of commentators such as Harvey (1990) and Massey (1998) indicate that cultural behavior takes place across geographical boundaries while at the same time remaining localized and relevant on a daily basis. Places where cultural creativity manifests itself include the home (especially for females), the school, the workplace, the street, and, most recently, the club. This concentration on the local brings us back to the definition of culture proffered by Williams, a definition grounded in issues related to class, industrialization, and politicization. In this formation cultural studies focuses on the "lived experience" of people producing meanings and values through everyday social interaction. The goal of all serious intellectual work, therefore, according to Williams, ought to be the achievement of community or a democratic common culture (Williams 1963). None of this work denies the importance of the idea of national identity as a means of articulating the elements of local and regional cultural behavior, but crucially it recognizes that all national identity, as Anderson (1983) argues, is a social and cultural construct rather than a primordial given. In this sense even the idea of a British cultural studies emphasizes too strongly the notion of a unified state identity whereas, in fact, there is a large body of research to show that for peripheral areas (see Bell 1990) and marginalized groups (see Gilroy 1987) the idea of Britain is extremely complex and problematic.

The development of cultural studies in Europe has also been hindered by the belief that Europe is the repository for much of what is usually termed "high" culture. This tradition harks back to the days of the "Grand Tour," and it is a tourist myth perpetuated by those wishing to sell Europe as a vehicle for enrichment through the visiting of various cities associated with "high" cultural excellence – Paris for art, Vienna for music, Prague for architecture, and so on. Graham and Labanyi (1995) acknowledge, in relation to Spain, that notions of "high" and "low" culture are social constructs aimed at suggesting that some are imbued with ethical values while others are not, and they see the distinction as not one between high and low culture but one which has three facets – high culture, popular culture, and the masses. In this distinction, however, their definition of the popular relates to ideas of folklore

while the masses refers to the culture of the proletariat formed during industrialization. This distinction confuses rather than clarifies the meanings popular culture has developed in relation to popular artforms such as cinema, music, and dress style and again insinuates, as they concede, an attempt by the established cultural commentators to create a connection between some mythical "volk," a peasant population linked with dignity to the land, and the modern state.

Evidently, what has developed here is a definition of "high" culture in the Arnoldian sense. Ang (1998a: 97) argues that the high/popular culture hierarchy is not only alive and well in European discourse on culture, but that "more importantly . . . the defense of 'high culture' takes on not just a conservative, but a critical value in European self-enunciation." This conservatism is also reflected in the nostalgia shown by George Steiner for the high intellectual culture of the coffee-house, "this particular space – of discourse, of shared leisure, of shared exchange of disagreements – by which I mean the coffee-house, does define a very peculiar historical space roughly from Leningrad to Kiev and Odessa" (quoted in Kearney 1992: 44).

Roman Horak (1999), in an article entitled "Cultural Studies in Germany (and Austria) and Why There Is No Such Thing," identifies the same prejudice against popular culture. Given that Rob Burns (1995) and Graham and Labanyi (1995) argue that the Frankfurt School played the key role in the developing study of culture in Germany it is significant that, having juxtaposed the work of the Birmingham School against an overview of the status of the social sciences in German/Austrian academia, he comes to the conclusion that, "even the most explicit critics of the Frankfurt School shared one thing with those they criticized – a disdain for, or even fear of, mass popular culture" (Horak 1999: 112).

This fear and disdain for the popular is, it could be suggested, linked closely to a fear of American culture. The threat of Americanization has been a constant theme in cultural studies and the early work of Hoggart and Williams was framed in the context of the celebration of a working-class tradition under threat from Hollywood films, Levis, Coca Cola, and McDonaldization. This threat takes on a greater significance in a Europe of "high" culture and becomes embroiled in debates about cultural imperialism. Tomlinson (1991) has shown that an unthinking acceptance of this thesis ignores the fact that cultural imperialism is itself a discourse, manufactured around five subdiscourses of dominance, media imperialism, nationality, global capitalism, and modernity. The apparent presence of each of these "problems" serves to reinforce conservative cultural policies and limit debate as to the *actual* significance and importance of the American influence in any particular country or region. Hence Steiner can define American influence as the "Culture of the Secondary," a form of parasitism which creates talk about talk and images of images, a culture which allows the development of the apparently mundane because there is nothing to offer in its place.

> Twenty-eight or thirty miles from Paris, they are building a Disneyland, the second largest in the world, and they expect three hundred thousand visitors in the first few months, and it will be followed by other theme amusement parks. Apparently, Russia is now equally eager to get in on this. I look on this with despair. (quoted in Kearney 1992: 46)

The fact is, however, that if Americanization is to be proved, it must be proved in the context of specific cultural practices and not assumed. As Webster (1988: 183) says, "there are still plenty of debates where American/popular culture is alluded to, and argued against, but not known."

All three of the preceding factors could be subsumed under the heading of Eurocentrism and it is this discourse which is the fourth assumption undermining the development of a European cultural studies. Eurocentrism assumes the superiority of Western history and sees Europe as the center for important progressive change in the modern world, a unique centre which is both the bearer of civilization and its protector. Ang (1998a) argues that this position has served to elide the discourse of Eurocentrism and the "real" Europe itself to the extent that Eurocentrism has been normalized as a kind of "common sense": "most Europeans are unthinkingly Eurocentric indeed because Eurocentrism is, in a fundamental way, formative of and crucial to the European sense of cultural identity" (Ang 1998a: 89). The result of this elision is an unquestioned and unquestioning assumption of superiority which permeates the European structure of feeling and prevents an analysis which could deconstruct the various aspects of this supposed superiority and allow important cultural debates to be opened and illuminated. The elision even challenges those intellectuals who, while aware of this Eurocentric straitjacket, continue to buy into the discourse through what Ang labels "reluctant Eurocentrism," a strategy which manifests itself as a belief that only Europeans can critique Europe.

Reasons to be Optimistic – Part One

If, as is argued, the development of a European cultural studies is being hindered by these four assumptions there needs to be a framework of strategies developed which will allow the evolution of a number of theoretical ways of examining aspects of European culture which remain hidden or unexamined.

One way this might be addressed would be to reject any notions of essentialism and apply an analytical model grounded in the concept of "hybridity." One such model is that suggested by Massey (1998: 123). Massey argues that all culture is subject to hybridity, emphasizing the idea that more mature peoples and places (for example Europe) have the capacity to draw on a variety of cultural influences. As she says, "this openness of cultural formations is not specific to the young. 'Hybridity' is probably a condition of all cultures" (Massey 1998: 124).

More significantly, Massey challenges the academic tradition of organizing cultural space in terms of hierarchical "scale" (body, home, community, region, nation, globe) and proposes instead a move from roots to routes which will create "a notion of space as organised, not into distinct scales, but rather through a vast complexity of interconnections" (1998: 124). One method of examining notions of "hybridity" and interconnectedness is through the metaphor of "border crossings."

This abstract idea has been grasped as a focus for discussions concerning the new forms of identity because it offers a concept that can accommodate (and appear to explain) the complexities of geographical areas where inhabitants are asked to belong to both a nation and a supranational state. It also serves to guard against any notion of essentialism while recognizing the importance of both the local and the global. As Ang puts it, "the borderland tends to be imagined as a utopic site of transgressive intermixture, hybridity and multiplicity, the supposed political radicalness of which mostly remains unquestioned" (Ang 1998b: 14).

This is a theme explored by a number of writers in *Border Crossing: Film in Ireland, Britain and Europe* (Hill et al. 1994), a collection of essays which discuss the economic and cultural significance of Europe for British and Irish film-makers. Amidst discussions of creativity, film production in Northern Ireland, and the necessity of a Celtic cinema, the two essays most relevant to this discussion deal with whether a European cinema exists, and if so, what its future might be. In answer to the first of these questions Philip French argues that the recognition of the need for national cinemas was essentially a perception of dictators such as Lenin and Hitler and he reaches the conclusion that there is indeed a European cinema. It is a cinema, however, constructed from a complex intermingling (border crossings) of a complex range of national and regional influences. Hence, as French argues in the example of Jacques Tourneur, the distinguished maker of American B movies,

> He was the son of Maurice Tourneur, the first established European director to work in the United States – he went there in 1914 and became one of the major figures of American silent cinema. Jacques became an American citizen and apart from five years in France from 1928 to 1933, he worked in the USA and was a remarkable exponent of the low-key horror movies (especially in collaboration with the Russian-born producer Val Lewton), the Western and the film noir thriller. Such are the complexities and, indeed, ironies in the relations between European and American cinema. (Hill et al. 1994: 52)

As to the future of European cinema, Hill also takes up this notion of the creative intercourse between regions, arguing that the idea of a pan-European cinema is problematic because it fails to recognize the hybrid nature of cultural identities. For Hill, however, this does not mean the European and the national are locked in opposition. "Rather, it is to indicate that what common European identity there is, or might be, only exists alongside and intermeshed with the nationally

and culturally specific. Ironically, therefore, the experience of 'being' or 'becoming European' might be precisely one of the areas which a national, or a nationally specific, cinema could and should address" (Hill et al. 1994: 72).

While the arguments of Hill, French, and others who contribute to the debates raised in *Border Crossing* are based on a concrete analysis of films, film-makers, and audience consumption, the view of border/cultural interchange taken by Chambers (1990) is more philosophical. Chambers attempts to find an answer to the problem of what it means to "be English" by journeying through the issues which underpin contemporary culture, philosophy, and criticism. He comes to the conclusion that no one idea can be understood without an analysis of how it fits into the network which is modern (postmodern) society and that this network can be accessed only through "border dialogues." In the final analysis this journey emphasizes the fact that acknowledgment of a European culture both reinforces and subverts the idea of "home" and undermines any notion of a "guaranteed context." "To point to limits and inhabit the border country of frontiers and margins robs discourse of a conciliatory conclusion" (Chambers 1990: 116).

Henry Giroux (1992) also shows that Europe can act as a "borderland" for global interaction when he argues that a discursive space can be created where a polyglot of languages and experiences can come together to intermingle in a way which emphasizes the multicultural nature of all cultural narratives. This notion is given worldwide expression in websites such as "Border Crossings" that attempt to show the impact various cultural positions have on both their local and global neighbors.

The role which the Internet will play in the development of a European cultural studies is significant. Stanley Hoffman (1981: 213) argues that "Europe remains a virtuality, the past is mere spectacle, and the future is a riddle," and it is telling that much of the recent work in cultural studies in Europe is Internet based. While one must be careful not to overestimate the importance and impact of the new communication technologies, Stratton is surely correct when he suggests that "the hyperspace of the Internet elides the geographical spatial formations of nation-states which underpin their claims to a national culture" (Stratton 2000: 725). In the context of a Europe struggling to articulate the tension between national and supranational identity this distinction is crucial because it allows an imagined cultural identity which is no threat to national boundaries. Remembering Appadurai's cultural "scapes" and the idea of flows of information, it is also the case that the Internet mediates any tension between center and periphery. It is not surprising, therefore, that some of the most interesting cultural studies debates are being promoted by those on what might be termed the periphery of Europe. Hence the work of the Research Institute for Austrian and International Literature and Cultural Studies (INST). This web-based research project operating under the title "Cultural Studies and Europe or the Reality of Virtuality" aims to address a number of key problematics in relation to cultural studies – multilingualism, education and scholar-

ship, libraries and universities, the issue of art as a divisive force, and migration. These problems are debated through an online discussion forum named the "cultural collabatory" which has received contributions from Italy, Poland, Germany, Norway, and in a wider context, Japan and Africa. The website has a number of themed pages, again asking the key questions such as "Does Europe Exist? – History, Potentialities and Problems of European Identity on these Grounds." The importance of addressing the identified problematics is ultimately grounded in a commitment to cultural studies as a way forward.

> The cultural forms mentioned continue current divisions, although they are a step toward improving mutual understanding and counter the use of culture as a means of exclusion. While there are still no sound political concepts in relation to cultural processes, there is discussion on the theme of "cultural policies for Europe" which points in that direction. The political vacuum to date has meant that "culture" has been appropriated primarily by nationalistic and populist groups (with the exception of modern art, which not by chance represents a bête noire as much to Le Pen as to the Taliban, Jorg Haider and Vajpayee). However conditions have changed in comparison to a Europe of nation states, potentially weakening the political opportunities of nationalists. These new conditions are in essence the necessity of furthering peace (and with it those elements which link cultures), the common economic area, new work structures, opportunities for cross-border communications, the search for compromise between different interest groups in society, the need for a new dynamic between societies and nature, the opportunity for people to participate in developments at all levels, etc. (INST, 1998)

The recognition of the hybridity of European identitiy would also be encouraged through a challenge to the traditional European cultural construct which has served to silence debate about marginalized groups. The analysis of difference and the "other" has been a central feature of cultural studies research. Edward Said is adamant, however, that Europe has not only not come to terms with the other in its midst, but has, through its literature for example, engaged in a "kind of paranoid, delusional fantasy" (quoted in Kearney 1992: 111) which is both xenophobic and fundamentally racist. It is imperative, according to Said, that Europe develops an understanding of its "other," if only to allow them to live together as "complementary enemies."

> There is also complementarity between Europe and its others. And that's the interesting challenge for Europe, not to purge it of all its outer affiliations and connections in order to try to turn it into some pure new thing. (Kearney 1992: 105).

Ang (1998a) argues that his process can only succeed if the privileged status given to European intellectuals in the critiquing of Europe is challenged by those very others. Citing the work of commentators such as the Indian historian Dipesh Chakrabarty, she contends that a real cultural studies of Europe can only develop if the idea of Europe as a linear, homogenizing process is challenged: "The

Other, with no agency of its own, is always defined as being at the receiving end of processes of 'Europeanization' and 'Westernization'. What is not acknowledged is that those at the receiving end of these processes are actively making their own histories even if it is always inescapably in conditions not of their own making" (Ang 1998a: 102).

Morley and Robins (1995) are also convinced of the importance to European identity and culture of a recognition of the "other," and argue that the way to bring this internationalism about is to promote "solidarities" with Third World cultures. In so doing the rich diversity of European culture will be recognized. "European identity can no longer be, simply and unproblematically, a matter of Western intellectual and cultural traditions . . . The question is whether ethnic (and also gendered) differences are disavowed and repressed, or whether they can be accepted – and accepted, moreover, in their difference" (Morley & Robins 1995: 41, 42).

The presence of hybridity and the need for a recognition of the "other" in European debates has been given greater importance by the "liberation" of the eastern European states. The violence that has been a feature of much of the emancipation process in eastern Europe has signaled the fact that the idea of nationhood has not been replaced by the idea of a European identity. This has renewed debate about the ways in which a culture to which all nations of Europe can contribute and accept as representative can be constructed.

An understanding of the way in which these "new" European states have imagined themselves may be found in an analysis of the ways in which the concept of *place* has been rethought to provide insights into the processes whereby the everyday environment underpins notions of identity and culture.

Contemporary place has three interrelated contexts – the local, the national, and the transnational – and discussions about their relations center on arguments concerning globalization and homogeneity. Much of the discussion surrounding the process of globalization has related to the concept of Americanization and the threat this holds for European identity (see George Steiner in Kearney 1992). This discussion has also related globalization to traditional notions of modernization and linked them in a "symbolic hierarchy" (Featherstone 1993: 170), the assumption being that as nations modernize they will absorb and hence duplicate American cultural practices (as well as other financial and consumer ideals). Ultimately this would lead to a homogeneous culture, albeit through a corrosive rather than a constructive homogenization. Featherstone challenges this theory of homogenization on the grounds that it prioritizes time over space and assumes that history has some inner logic associated with progress, giving it a univeralizing force. Such a position ignores the postmodern challenge to theories of development, particularly claims concerning the end of history as a unitary process. He argues, "This secularisation of the notions of progress and the perfectibility of the world entails a greater awareness of the constructed nature of history, of the use of rhetorical devices and the capacity to deconstruct narratives" (Featherstone 1993: 171).

For Featherstone, then, the paradoxical consequence of the process of globalization is that people recognize the range and extensiveness of their local cultures, the result being an increase in diversity rather than homogeneity. Clearly, global process "involves both the particularisation of universalism and the universalisation of particularism" (Bird et al. 1993: 253).

The key problem, therefore, in exploring the increased intensity of cultural exchange between European nations and European locales is how to shift the debate away from the general (statements about flows of images, products, and people) and into the specifics of a model which will facilitate a mapping of activities undertaken by specific groups in specific contexts. A developing cultural studies of Europe has a key role to play in the articulation of such a model and both Giddens, and Appadurai have attempted to produce relevant models.

Giddens (1990) argues for four interconnected features in a world system. These are the world capitalist economy, the nation-state system, the worldwide diffusion of modern technologies with the associated division of labor, and the emergence of a world military order. The problems with this model, in the context of the present argument, are that the factors operate at the national rather than the transnational level, but more crucially, they focus on the economic rather than the cultural despite Giddens, claim that the cultural dimension is implicit.

Appadurai (1990) goes some way to addressing these problems with the concept of "scapes" as a pattern for globalization. Five scapes are identified – "ethnoscapes" which are created through the movements of people such as tourists, immigrants, or exiles; "technoscapes" created by the flow of machinery and industrial plant, national and transnational; "mediascapes" produced by the flow of images and information and distributed through the multiplicity of media forms; "financescapes" created by the rapid flow of money in all its forms around the world; and "ideoscapes" related to the flow of ideas between states, superstate organizations, and movements. While it has been suggested that these "scapes" represent merely the progress of the capitalist economy towards a world system (as described by Giddens), the concept of flow emphasizes Appadurai's conviction that the "scapes" are dynamic and that particular cultural groups are involved in a constant negotiation with combinations of scapes in the process of the construction of particular cultural identities. As Jarvie and Maguire point out, "Instead of endlessly arguing about whether homogeneity or heterogeneity, integration or disintegration, unity or diversity are evident, it is more adequate to see these processes as interwoven. Nor is it a question of either/or but of balances and blends" (Jarvie & Maguire 1994: 251).

If Appadurai's concept of "scapes" is applied to the New Europe it is apparent there is a clear dichotomy between the economic and the cultural. Postwar cooperation was inevitably concentrated on issues of reconstruction, and early agreements such as the Brussels Treaty (1948), the Council of Europe

(1949), and the Western European Union in the 1950s focused on the development of what might be termed the "technoscape" and the "financescape." It could be suggested that at this early stage in the process these organizations were intergovernmental rather than supranational (Hainsworth 1994: 9), but by the late 1950s more genuinely integrative bodies such as the European Economic Coal and Steel Community (1951), the European Atomic Community (1958), and the European Economic Community were all firmly established.

While there was a constant reference to the importance of cultural issues in a Europe undergoing reconstruction, there were no policies or agencies which addressed the creation of a European cultural identity directly. In other words the "Ideoscape," "mediascape," and "ethnoscape" elements were not progressing with the same urgency as the economic elements. Hainsworth (1994) has shown how, in relation to film, this has changed to some extent recently, but it is crucial that the importance of cultural capital is recognized in a more general sense. Traditional notions of business and politics are being challenged by patterns of consumption which have a cultural foundation. This challenge, usually described in stereotypical form as the move from Fordism to post-Fordism in the industrial economies of the West, signals a profound shift in emphasis which recognizes that the key factor in the culture industry is the industry, not the culture (Jameson 1991). Rather than being commodified *à la* the Frankfurt School, a point has been reached where industry is commodified through culture. "It is not just that the economic determines the cultural but, as a number of commentators have observed, economies are inflected culturally and industry in general comes to resemble cultural industry in particular" (McGuigan 1996: 88).

If the argument for a move away from static notions of "high" culture into forms of experience which recognize hybridity and the importance of practices associated with marginalized groupings, then it is necessary to identify the kinds of material and cultural behavior which might make up a cultural studies of Europe. The focal point for an identification of such formations is, again, the proposition that "everyday lived experience" should be the foundation principle on which various material practices are constructed. This concentration on "ordinariness" encourages the examination of the types of data and subjects that would be the key elements in such formations. Alan Durant (1997) offers an interesting typology of cultural studies resources in an article exploring the pedagogic possibilities of British Cultural Studies. Durant gives a range of resources and explains how they might be incorporated into the study curriculum. The resources cited include interaction with people, personal recorded testimony of others, visiting places, exposure to the country's media, social rituals, and customs, social institutions, surveys, statistics and charts, heuristic contrasts and oppositions, and reading signs and styles (Durant 1997: 24–30). Doubtless other suggestions could be added to this list, but its range illustrates an attempt to identify those ordinary practices that can underpin an developing

cultural studies framework. The identification of a network of interlocking cultive facets relates to the concept of common culture outlined by Paul Willis in research undertaken, significantly, for the Gulbenkian Institute, in which he investigated cultural activities in relation to the cultural media. Willis revisited the research, originally undertaken in 1987, in 1998, and developed "Notes for a Common Culture." These notes argued that through the three processes of "symbolic work," "symbolic creativity," and "symbolic extension" the elements of a common culture emerge. This is a common culture that renders out of date older notions such as middle-class, working-class, or regional culture. It is a common culture that is not controled or directed by economic power.

> Common culture has continuities with, but has to be distinguished from, traditional and working-class cultures. Nor is common culture coterminous with popular culture. For me the former concerns ordinary, everyday practices, the latter the provided products. The same materials can either weigh down daily life with banality or be bent to its rhythms according to context and social practice. Popular culture is simply the surprising and unpredictable catalyst. Meanwhile ordinary culture, everyday sense and meaning-making, may be shifting in almost epochal ways from varieties of deference and parochialism to varieties of openness and profane independence. (Willis 1998: 169)

Ireland: A Case Study

The complex matrix of theoretical ideas of which hybridity, anti-essentialism, awareness of place, and an understanding of everyday lived experience form a central framework is only useful if it can be applied in specific locations with specific effects. One such specific context is Ireland, which despite its post-colonial status and dysfunctional political problems has managed to reimagine itself as a vibrant, (post)modern state with an aggressive economic standing built through the construction of a complicated network of global links. The so-called "Celtic Tiger" has not been constructed and reimagined at the expense of more traditional definitions of nationality. Rather, as Martin McLoone has shown, the New Ireland is a product of an intense debate about culture and identity which has touched every facet of Irish cultural life and been articulated through the changing position of the Irish economy.

McLoone identifies three distinct phases of economic development in Ireland: a first period of growth from 1958 to 1978, a second period of stagnation from 1978 to 1988, and the present period from 1988 which has heralded unimagined growth. "This economic success has given rise to the sobriquet 'the Celtic Tiger' to describe Ireland's increasingly vigorous and assertive presence on the world stage and needless to say has energised internal debate more completely than even the years of gloom had done" (McLoone 1994).

While McLoone is particularly interested in film, he illustrates how this economic ferment drove debates about culture and identity, and links the often acidic discussions taking place in Ireland at that time about film, television, national identity, and religious/moral issues with the various economic periods.

What is significant about McLoone's analysis is that although he rightly foregrounds the Irish film industry/culture's relationship with America and Britain, the implicit argument is that the solution to the postcolonial problem with those countries was to be found through reimagining Ireland in a European cultural context. Hence in relation to Britain he suggests that "in many ways, the *'Europeanisation' of Irish Identity came to be seen as the most effective way of breaking the close economic and cultural ties with Britain*" (my italics) (McLoone 1994). Or in relation to the 1976 Broadcasting Act he concludes that, "the changes [in the Act] here are profound and make a shift away from the old nationalist consensus *to a new orthodoxy built around a liberal, European sense of identity*" (my italics) (McLoone 1994).

The development of a non-essentialist definition of culture in Ireland (in this case Northern Ireland) has also been encouraged by studying the impact of popular culture on traditional identity positions. The accepted explanations for cultural difference in Northern Ireland tend to emphasize simplistic variations on the Catholic/Protestant divide. This emphasis fails to recognize, in a similar fashion to the European reluctance to recognize popular cultural expressions, that cultural articulation for many people, particularly the young, is grounded in the everyday. The construction of an alternative, anti-essentialist cultural paradigm, therefore, involves the recognition of cultural and subcultural activities which challenge embedded notions of cultural identity, while offering alternative identities based on an awareness of transnational movements such as rave culture, popular music, and New Age culture. In the Irish context two recent articles would suggest that this process has started. Martin McLoone (1994), in his analysis of Van Morrison, illustrates the ways in which the complexity of cultural influences are merged in the music he produces. In so doing, Morrison produces a music which for those from Northern Ireland transcends the particular in any given song. "*Astral Weeks* is, of course, about Belfast, not about the Derry of my roots nor the Dublin of my student days. But when I first heard it, I recognised it as being about the 'here and now' of where I then was and, even more crucially, about the past of where I had been" (McLoone 1994: 41). McLoone speaks of the pride he felt that Morrison was from Northern Ireland – "he was one of us" – and goes on to examine the outside influences which have impacted on Morrison's music and the complex manner in which the local and the global have been interrogated in the construction of his "rootedness." This process, McLoone concludes, has been crucial to the understanding of the development of popular cultural identity in Northern Ireland.

> His achievements have set an example for peripheral indigenous cultures everywhere, demonstrating how an adherence to, and a transgression of, one's "rooted-

> ness" is not only possible but is actually the best way to guard against the dominance of trans-global popular culture. (McLoone 1994: 44)

In an examination of the study of culture in Northern Ireland, David Butler also argues against "narrowly cast" and "essentialist" models of cultural identity (Butler 1994). Having established that cultural identity is formed in society through the social relationships we negotiate day to day, Butler argues that it is the constant gathering of cultural reference points which ultimately creates rootedness. This is not to say that there is some given relationship between culture and identity; rather that cultural formations should be imagined as a "border crossing (social, geographic, economic, philosophical). Minimally, group identities are made in history: a social activity requiring wilful invention, imagination, and intent. Cultural practices are no more nor less than the embodiment of structured social relations, but, to be clear, there is no necessary relationship between culture and identity. We have to think ourselves into them" (Butler 1994: 32).

Butler argues, therefore, that "traditional" cultural practices do no more than reinforce the divisions in Northern Irish society, and he is particularly critical of attempts to create consensus, on the grounds that such attempts confirm the very aspects of sectarianism they are designed to undermine and that the concept of respect for all traditions may allow the worst excesses of sectarian behavior to go unchallenged on the grounds that it is representative. Ultimately, Butler calls for a widening of the definition of accepted/unacceptable cultural practice in order that the dissensual nature of Northern Irish society be recognized, a process which will challenge exclusivity and essentialism.

> I would propose an extensive understanding of the making and the meaning of cultural formations: that cultural identities are formed in the midst of a wide range of influences and constraints, in the contemporary world as much as in and by the past. Besides sectarian cultures there are, of course, limitless instances of overlap and inflow: from music, movies, broadcast television, in books and magazines, in the high street and other more or less exotic locations. These are the conditions of (post)modern life. Also, it is vital that we explode the fantasy of total and exclusive identities, which the dichotomous processes of balanced sectarianism inadvertently sustain. (Butler 1994: 55)

The importance of these analyses is that they are creating a foundation for the recognition that Northern Ireland is already building cultural identities which function outside the essentialist cultural identities promoted by the explanations of Northern Ireland which predominate. They recognize that in the operation of the young sectarian gangs, the punk movement, or the rave movement individuals and groups are producing cultural practices and formations which, while evidently informed by the context of conflict, do not represent themselves through traditional signs, customs, beliefs, and icons. Neither do they look only inward, being willing to ally on a transnational basis with other like-minded

groups or individuals for whom a shared cultural practice creates a shared imagined community. As Colin Graham suggests, culture should be presented as a "process rather than in stasis; as ideological and conflictual rather than universal and medicinal; as an emanation from all parts of society, rather than stratified into 'high', 'low', or 'popular', and identifying movement across cultures as resourceful, ironic filtering across ideological monoliths" (Graham 1994: 74).

Ireland, then, can be seen as a specific example of the process which European leaders hope to promote, of a country using European economic links to initiate debates about culture which create a hybrid, multicultural society which, while not without problems (McLoone cites racism and the existence of a large disenfranchised urban underclass) can, nevertheless, produce globally recognized examples of "ordinary" cultural practices such as U2, the Corrs, Van Morrison, Riverdance, and, of course, many critically acclaimed films. The success of these ventures serves to underscore further the importance of an open, all-embracing cultural identity which is at once Irish, European, and Anglo-American.

Conclusion

To attempt an overview or analysis of European cultural studies is to be immediately reminded of Ien Ang's warnings concerning the privileged position European intellectuals construct whereby the proposition that self-doubt is a uniquely European quality excludes "others" from an analysis of Europe and underlines the conceit that Europe has the capacity to interrogate itself. Nevertheless, this self-examination is vital if Europe is to move from a form of cultural study which is static, conservative, and finds its intellectual force and relevance in replaying and reinforcing the mythical status of European "high" art and cultural iconography.

Having established exactly what is meant by European cultural studies, the move can then be made to create and articulate projects that will offer opportunities for advancement and progression where European economic and cultural policies can operate with a visionary complementarity. That definition will be facilitated if those working in European cultural studies create the conditions necessary to confront the key issues as outlined by Ang (1998a: 89):

> How are Eurocentric modes of thinking articulated within contemporary European culture itself as an "implicit (self)positioning," a lived structure of feeling? How does this structure of feeling inform the experience of being European in the late twentieth century? And what is the politics of European Eurocentrism today? These questions go some way towards what I would call a cultural studies of contemporary Europe – that is, an understanding of "Europe" not just as an abstract idea, but as a concrete, complex and contradictory social space where

particular forms of cultural practice and lived experience are shaped, negotiated, and struggled over.

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