

BREAKING IN/BREAKING OUT:
CULTURAL STUDIES CONFRONTS THE CURRICULUM AND PEDAGOGY Paper presented at
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In speaking about Cultural Studies I am speaking autobiographically (Stuart Hall has said that that's the only way you or I can speak Stuart Hall, "Cultural Studies and its Theoretical Legacies," in Lawrence Grossberg et.al., eds., Cultural Studies, New York & London: Routledge, 1992.), and somewhat tentatively, given that the particular line

I want to take - namely, cultural studies as pedagogical practice - has scarcely been articulated, certainly not within the discourses of Cultural Studies currently available nor in Schools of Education. In the 800 odd page 1992 collection Cultural Studies, edited by Grossberg, Nelson and Treichler which probably marks the state of art of Cultural Studies at the present time, there's one piece by Giroux on cultural studies and critical pedagogy Henry Giroux, "Resisting Difference: Cultural Studies and the Discourse of Critical Pedagogy," in Grossberg, Nelson & Treichler, Cultural Studies, London & New York: Routledge, 1992. and there are the odd comments made by feminists like bell hooks and Carolyn Steedman about their pedagogical practices. Steedman comments Carolyn Steedman, in Grossberg, Nelson, Treichler, p.617 that what is missing so far from the accounts of British Cultural Studies is how it has been shaped by teachers and taught as much as by theoretical questions. Certainly, the story I'm going to tell began as a practical/political response to a particular classroom situation, not with Theory. But while I say that I also want to stress that no classroom practice takes place without theory. What is at issue is the kind of theory, who makes it and how.

Cultural Studies continues to emerge in different contexts and with different emphases and interests. Indeed, Meaghan Morris and

Lawrence Grossberg have referred to the fad and fashion of Cultural Studies and to its current "boom". But I believe that the emergence of Cultural Studies, in whatever shape or form, is not so much from fad or fashion as it is a response to what critics read as the contemporary "crisis" of knowledge in the disciplines in Western universities. There are numerous references to the contemporary "crisis" in knowledge. Edward Said has argued that the University as a site of disciplinary autonomy is under siege. Knowledge produced and disseminated under surveillance in specialized disciplinary

territories, thus protecting the methods of knowledge production, the identity of the field, its experts, its institutional presence, is now being challenged. Stuart Hall has pointed to the knowledge crisis in his story of the emergence of Cultural Studies in Birmingham. The break up of old structures of thought (theoretical frameworks, categories, themes, narratives, metaphors) is made possible, he claims, by the force of historical events. Cornel West has argued that the historical/cultural coordinates producing the current "crisis" of knowledge include the waning of the age of Europe since World War 11, the decline of North America as a superpower (which changes significantly the frameworks of American Sociology for instance) and the ongoing decolonization process with the consequent dislocation, displacement and mobility of peoples all over the world. The new global telecommunications, the international division of labor and the outdated notion of nation-states are other factors. (see Stuart Hall, "Cultural Studies: two paradigms," *Media, Culture, Society*, 2, 1980: p.57; also Edward Said, "Opponents, Audiences, Constituencies and Community," in Hal Foster, ed., *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, Washington: Bay Press, 1983; Cornel West, "Black Culture and Postmodernism," in Barbara Kruger and Phil Mariani, eds., *Remaking History*, Seattle: Bay Press, 1989) I'm referring for instance to the Humanities and the ongoing "crisis" in the social sciences and to Schools of Education where urgent transformation of the traditional organizing categories - subject areas, teaching levels etc. - is necessary in the contemporary historical juncture. But in order to open the way for a discussion of the possibilities for the emergence of Cultural Studies in Schools of Education in the future, I want to make problematic the way Cultural Studies is conceptualized in Australia at the present time, that is the focus either on Cultural Policy Studies or the rather limited "nationalization" of Cultural Studies as Australian Studies or, most often, its interpretation as media and popular culture. It is the latter you mostly find in Schools of Education, if there is support for Cultural Studies at all. Giroux and Simon's collection *Popular Culture, Schooling, and Everyday Life* takes that line but while I support that kind of Cultural Studies in education (it validates and articulates what a lot of teachers, including myself, have been doing for at least two decades anyway), I think it's too narrow. What I'd like to suggest is the possibility of a more radical project for Cultural Studies, namely a working out of new directions in the theory-practice of knowledge, curriculum and pedagogy which brings

together culture, identity, knowledge and post-coloniality.

To come to my story of Cultural Studies. Actually, there are two stories but the first I'll just mention. Stanley Aronowitz has been heading up a move to establish a doctoral program in Cultural

Studies at The City University of New York. This has emerged partly out of disillusionment with the discipline of sociology and in this it has some similarities with the break with sociology made by Hall and others in setting up the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in Birmingham. See Stuart Hall, "Cultural Studies and the Centre: some problematics and problems," in *Culture, Media, Language: Working Papers in Cultural Studies, 1972-79*, London: Hutchinson, 1980. But it has attracted students from various disciplines. I can't report on how far that project has got at this point but over several years large numbers of students gathered in the Sociology Department on the 8th floor of The Graduate School in 42nd Street for Cultural Studies meetings, workshops and events and, as a consequence, Cultural Studies was established at an inter-disciplinary level and within the Sociology program regular classes were held. Needless to say, although an inter-disciplinary project was not the radical project proposed by some who advocated a non-disciplinary approach, nevertheless, it was perceived as a threatening presence.

That's one story. The other, which is connected, is of my own efforts to adopt a "cultural studies perspective" in undergraduate sociology/social science classrooms in The City University of New York where I taught for six years from 1985-1991. The specific "crisis" in knowledge I've been engaged with is that in the socialsciences and, specifically, the discipline of sociology as it is confronted by contemporary post/neo-colonial conditions and a constellation of critical discourses, including Cultural Studies. This is the story I'll tell in more detail here.

First, let me set the scene. The City University of New York, the second largest, I think, in North America, has around 130,000 students on some 20 campuses spread around the five boroughs of New York. I taught at 3 of these. All campuses were multiracial and multiethnic. Students who came to the social science classes I taught were African-American, Afro-Caribbean, Asian-American, Latin students from all over South and Central America, Mexico and the Caribbean and a small group of white working class students. This situation was made more complex by my presence as a white woman (in some classes the only white person) in a position of authority with predominantly women and men of color.

I can truthfully say this posed the biggest challenge of my teaching career! Not only was I in a new city and a different culture (we might be the 51st state, as a recent article in *The Australian* has claimed, but New York City is definitely not Adelaide!), but I had also landed myself in the middle of what had scarcely been articulated as a new historical moment in that place. And I had to make sense of, and respond to, the complexity of that on a daily basis in the classroom. Material changes (cultural,

economic) were converging with a constellation of theoretical

critiques. The presence in social science and sociology classrooms of "new", post-colonial students whose life experiences cannot be explained by "mainstream" American sociology with its monocultural frameworks brings to "crisis" the theoretical frameworks, categories, narratives and meanings of that discipline. And, simultaneously, the social sciences have been put into question by contemporary cultural theories, specifically the critiques of science by feminism and "postmodernism", the reconceptualization of "the social" and "the cultural" in Cultural Studies discourses and the critiques by post-colonial and "third world" critics of the colonizing tendencies of Western (colonial) discourses more generally. According to those critiques, the social sciences were culturally and historically constituted bodies of knowledge and, in the contemporary post-colonial moment, it was necessary to "read" them critically as instances of discursive colonization. Post-colonial critics (like Homi Bhabha and feminists and "womanists" of color See, for example, Homi Bhabha, "Signs Taken for Wonders:

Questions of Ambivalence and Authority under a Tree Outside Delhi, May 1817," in Henry Louis Gates, Jr., (ed), "Race", Writing and Difference, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986: 163-183; Hazel Carby, "White Woman, Listen! Black Feminism and the Boundaries of Sisterhood," in Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, The Empire Strikes Back: Race and Racism in 70's Britain, London: Hutchinson, 1982; Patricia Hill Collins, Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment, Perspectives on Gender, vol.2. Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1990; Hortense Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book," Diacritics, 17, 2(summer 1987): 65-81.) argue that colonizing discourses function

primarily through a strategy of disavowal, cultural disavowal and self-erasure. Maria Lugones has put it this way: "You do not see me because you do not see yourself and you do not see yourself because you declare yourself outside of culture." Maria Lugones, in Gloria Anzaldúa, ed., Making Face, Making Soul/Haciendo Caras: Creative and Critical Perspectives by Women of Color, San Francisco: Aunt Lute, 1990.

It seemed to me that the "body" of knowledge of the social sciences was being critically interrupted on multiple levels; philosophically and epistemologically (what was needed was a new theory-practice of knowledge in post-colonial times, that is new

directions in epistemology), in terms of methodology (the "method" of cultural studies is cultural reading), in terms of organization (the disciplines and their boundaries were in doubt and "border

crossings" between science and fiction seemed necessary), the key categories of "the social" and "the cultural" had to be rearticulated (they cannot simply be taken as alternatives and slashed as in social/cultural), and at the level of pedagogy and, of course, the production of textbooks and other materials. And as Hall has pointed out, a cultural studies perspective provides a space-off from which to challenge and reorganize disciplinary territory.

So, in the first place, my "cultural studies approach" to the social sciences involved an upfront political commitment. As a teacher-cultural worker, I felt I had a moral, ethical and political imperative to figure out a way to intervene in the production of social science knowledge, to work against its colonizing tendencies, given that my students were mostly men and women of color who for the most part didn't get a mention in the textbooks I was supposed to teach. Their lives, experiences and voices had either been dismissed by American social science or read in distorted ways (the black family has typically been seen as "pathological" because it didn't look like the regular white middle class family) or, social science research had not kept up with the contemporary historical changes, or what was being done had not yet reached the textbooks.

In terms of political commitment, what I mean by Cultural Studies as pedagogical practice is not separable from critical or "feminist pedagogy" "Feminist pedagogy" has never been well articulated (see, for instance, Kathleen Weiler, *Women Teaching for Change: Gender, Class and Power*, Massachusetts: Bergin & Garvey, 1988) probably because it's a wrong headed notion anyway, as is "feminist science"(see Evelyn Fox Keller, Sandra Harding and other feminist critics of science). Meanwhile, of course, the feminist project itself has been exposed by post-colonial critics as Western, white and middle class in its formulation. but I think it's a more finely tuned articulation of

those terms for post-colonial times. Firstly, it isn't a question of anything goes. There are specific stakes. It is a "worldly vocation" in its overt politics and foregrounding of "life" and "the world", that is, the contemporary (and, therefore, it is what I call my "improper vocation" given the traditional separation of "life" and "the world" in the academy and professional teaching generally. The political stakes have involved challenging the representational politics of the social sciences and, in particular, Euro/ethnocentric and patriarchal discourses at this post-colonial moment.

Cultural Studies contests the social sciences, its specific methods of knowledge production, its narratives, categories and specific kinds of knowledge, the "proper" knowledge of that disciplinary space.

I've been working on the notion of "autobiography as cultural critique", See Nancy Miller, *Getting Personal: Feminist Occasions and Other Autobiographical Acts*, New York & London: Routledge, 1991. Miller uses the term "autobiography as cultural critique", transcoding it from James Clifford's idea of "ethnography as cultural critique". which, I argue, offers the possibility of reclaiming both "the personal" (selves) and culture disavowed in the traditional social science classroom. It involves the foregrounding of lived lives, of "personal" histories that are also collective and cultural, that are different but also the same in certain ways,

and of taking those lives as points of departure in an ongoing cultural struggle over meaning and representation. Writing and reading the self/others are central. "Social" science classrooms become sites of cultural critique, neither in opposition to, nor "outside" the world, but a part of it. And that "world" has to be understood in ever widening circles. I like to represent this as concentric circles with "selves"/bodies in the centre moving through community, national and international frames.

And when I talk about taking "life experiences" as points of departure (which implies the displacing, or temporary suspension of textbook knowledge), I'm not talking about "everyday life" (and while "subcultures" or popular culture may come into this it's not my central interest). To speak of "everyday life", or "every man" or "the man on the street" (Blanchot, De Certeau) is to invoke, as Meaghan Morris has written, the white European middle class male. Meaghan Morris, "'On the Beach'", in Grossberg, Nelson and Treichler *Cultural Studies*, New York: Routledge, 1992: 450-478. Cultural Studies for me has to insist on opening up a more complex understanding of culture (that is beyond texts and artefacts, or the everyday) which takes "the social" and culture as woven together and crossed by "race"/class/gender. (Speaking of "race"/class/gender and culture. From a cultural studies perspective I have been able to critique the way discourses privileging "the social" have constructed identity in discrete parts and without reference to culture. Gender is always separated from class and "race" and sexuality is omitted altogether. This means that black men and women don't find themselves represented in any of the textbook chapters on identity).

That brings me to the notion of the "world"-traveller which is my preferred version of the hybrid or the multiple, decentered subject of "postmodernism" and is the central motif in my work. My interest here is in rearticulating the categories of identity, the self and other (the same/other dichotomy), that pervade the social sciences and Western knowledge generally, and in reworking modernist and "postmodernist" epistemologies of "identity" and "difference"

respectively, shifting to an epistemology of "identity-in-difference." This involves a rearticulation of the time/space economy of both modernism and "postmodernism", a shift from the notion of a permanent identity for all time to an identity in "more than one time, more than one place".

The interest in hybridity, or for me "world"-travelling, brings together the key elements I'm interested in, identity, culture, knowledge and post-coloniality. Contemporary post-colonial conditions all over the world, including Australia, have raised the possibility of a constitutive role in the production of new knowledge for post-colonial subjects. When I say this I'm thinking of a more radical project than the liberal agenda of multiculturalism which focuses on difference/diversity and "inclusion". That's still a version of colonialist discourse. I use the term "world"-traveller See Maria Lugones, "Playfulness, 'World'-Travelling, and Loving Perception," in Gloria Anzaldua, ed., *Making Face, Making Soul/Haciendo Caras: Creative and Critical Perspectives by Women of Color*, San Francisco: Aunt Lute, 1990: 390-402. to name the hybrid, hyphenated students For Trinh Minh-ha, the hyphenated reality of Asian-American, Caribbean-American, Latin-Americans signifies the cultural interval between, in-between ground, a becoming where old rules and old categories don't apply. (see Trinh Minh-ha, "Not You/Like You: Post-Colonial Women and the Interlocking Questions of Identity and Difference," *Inscriptions* 3/4, (1988): 71-77; Trinh Minh-ha, *When The Moon Waxes Red: Representation, Gender and Cultural Politics*, New York: Routledge, 1991) who daily cross cultural borders, "border persons" in

Gloria Anzaldua's words, Gloria Anzaldua, *Borderlands/ La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, San Francisco: Spinsters/ Aunt Lute, 1987. "new ethnicities" in Stuart Hall's, Stuart Hall, "New Ethnicities," in Kobena Mercer, ed., *Black Film/British Cinema*. ICA Documents 7, London: Institute of Contemporary Arts, 1988. people who inhabit multiple places and times and multiple "worlds" in these post-colonial times. But you don't have to have a hyphen to be a "world"-traveller. Stuart Hall claims we are all "world"-travellers, it's just that the time/space economy of modernist theories of subjectivity haven't represented us as such. But we are all insider/outside, that is both inside and outside one or more times/places simultaneously.

In the classroom, as "world"-travellers, we tell "travel" stories; as "border persons" we do "border work". On "border work" see Aronowitz and Giroux, *Postmodern Education: Politics, Culture, & Social Criticism*, Minneapolis &

Oxford: Minnesota Press, 1991. And here I borrow Frigga Haug's term "memory work". Frigga Haug, ed., *Female Sexualization: A Collective Work of Memory*, trans. by E. Carter, London: Verso, 1987. The familiar, that which is re-membered, becomes a point of departure, for "re-reading the self," others and the world. And following post-colonial feminists, notably Trinh Minh-ha, I seek to reclaim story telling, bringing together, without merging, story and analysis, which have been split by modern science. "Reading" (interpretation) is understood as incorporated into story; story as incorporating analysis. I view story telling/"reading" as "braided narrative". And whereas Theory in the modernist project occupied a privileged territory and register, theory for me is the braided narrative of story telling/"reading". Theory making and analysis/"reading"/interpretation as professional practice is displaced.

The argument I want to make is that the lives of "world"-travellers is a useful and necessary point of departure for the teacher-as-critical cultural worker committed to personal and cultural transformation which includes the production of new knowledge. The displaced/dislocated I use "displacement" in two ways, one to name the global uprooting of peoples in contemporary historical conditions (the experience of dislocation or geographical displacement) and, secondly, to refer to the task of rereading/rewriting, un-naming/re-naming old knowledge in search of new narratives, new categories (that is, conceptual displacement). That is, the notion of "displacement", if it is to challenge the real world of discursive colonization, must exceed the mere textual strategies of Derridean "postmodern" philosophy. "world"-traveller can provide a vantage point on the scene of post-colonial cultural politics, not the only vantage point, given that as I have said we are all hybrids, but one that can bring to "crisis" the state of colonial/colonizing knowledge.

My particular take on Cultural Studies, then, locates it as an ongoing process of de-colonization (discursive and non-discursive) through the reclaiming of cultures and identities in the institutional location of the classroom and with the specific political intent of generating new knowledge. And while I am speaking to my work in New York City, I know I'm also speaking to the experiences of many Australian teacher-cultural workers in inner city and country schools in this country who have found their students are not represented (that is, they are discursively and culturally colonized) by the discipline, the textbooks and in other non-discursive practices in the schools. I am naming Cultural Studies, then, as that process in curriculum and pedagogy whereby teacher-cultural workers reclaim and foreground culture and the

lives and experiences of students. She provides a forum for cultural battles, culture understood, not as different lifestyles or material/cultural artefacts, although they are not dismissed, but as meaning and representation, that is, as ideological and political battles which are the root of knowledge and radical

pedagogical practice. Moreover, while she takes account of differences, she does not celebrate difference, moving beyond it to a critical zone in-between where she can engage in the production of new knowledge and new modes of knowledge production. I reject the liberal politics of multiculturalism which does little more than acknowledge the plurality or diversity of cultures while promoting "inclusion". I am trying to counter multiculturalism as inclusion by moving to put the discourse of difference to work in radical new ways. "World"-travellers undermine simplistic versions of multiculturalism. This is how the teacher as cultural worker engages in her "worldly", if "improper", vocation of Cultural Studies. She knows this is risky business but has the political commitment and vision to know that the risk must be taken.

NOTES