CULTURAL STUDIES

- 'DISMANTLING' FREMANTLE?

- VISIONS OF DISORDER

- PROVINCIALIZING EUROPE

CULTURAL STUDIES

JOHN HARTLEY
IEN ANG

EDITORIAL STATEMENT

Cultural Studies seeks to foster more open analytic, critical and political conversations by encouraging people to push the dialogue into fresh, uncharted territory. It is devoted to understanding the specific ways cultural practices operate in everyday and social formations. But it is also devoted to intervening in the processes by which the existing techniques, institutions and structures of power are reproduced, resisted and transformed. Although focused in some sense on culture, we understand the term inclusively rather than exclusively. We are interested in work that explores the relations between cultural practices and everyday life, economic relations, the material world, the State, and historical forces and contexts. The journal is not committed to any single theoretical or political position; rather, we assume that questions of power organized around differences of race, class, gender, sexuality, age, ethnicity, nationality, colonial relations, etc., are all necessary to an adequate analysis of the contemporary world. We assume as well that different questions, different contexts and different institutional positions may bring with them a wide range of critical practices and theoretical frameworks.

'Cultural studies' as a fluid set of critical practices has moved rapidly into the mainstream of contemporary intellectual and academic life in a variety of political, national and intellectual contexts. Those of us working in cultural studies find ourselves caught between the need to define and defend its specificity and the desire to resist closure of the ongoing history of cultural studies by any such act of definition. We would like to suggest that cultural studies is most vital politically and intellectually when it refuses to construct itself as a fixed or unified theoretical position that can move freely across historical and political contexts. Cultural studies is in fact constantly reconstructing itself in the light of changing historical projects and intellectual resources. It is propelled less by a theoretical agenda than by its desire to construct possibilities, both immediate and imaginary, out of historical circumstances; it seeks to give a better understanding of where we are so that we can create new historical contexts and formations which are based on more just principles of freedom, equality, and the distribution of wealth and power. But it is, at the same time, committed to the importance of the 'detour through theory' as the crucial moment of critical intellectual work.

Moreover, cultural studies is always interdisciplinary; it does not seek to explain everything from a cultural point of view or to reduce reality to culture. Rather it attempts to explore the specific effects of cultural practices using whatever resources are intellectually and politically available and/or necessary. This is, of course, always partly determined by the form and place of its institutionalization. To this end, cultural studies is committed to the radically contextual, historically specific character not only of cultural practices but also of the production of knowledge within cultural studies itself. It assumes that history, including the history of critical thought, is never guaranteed in advance, that the relations and possibilities of social life and power are never necessarily stitched into place, once and for all. Recognizing that 'people make history in conditions not of their own making', it seeks to identify and examine those moments when people are manipulated and deceived as well as those moments when they are active, struggling and even resisting. In that sense cultural studies is committed to the popular as a cultural terrain and a political force.

Cultural Studies will publish essays covering a wide range of topics and styles. We hope to encourage significant intellectual and political experimentation, intervention and dialogue. At least half the issues will focus on special topics, often not traditionally associated with cultural studies. Occasionally, we will make space to present a body of work representing a specific national, ethnic or social tradition. Whenever possible, we intend to represent the truly international nature of contemporary work, without ignoring the significant dif ferences that are the result of speaking from and to specific contexts. We invite articles, reviews, critiques, photographs and other forms of 'artistic' production, and suggestions for special issues. And we invite readers to comment on the strengths and weaknesses, not only of the project and progress of cultural studies, but of the project and progress of *Cultural Studies* as well.

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Larry Grossberg
Janice Radway

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Contributions should be sent to Professor Lawrence Grossberg, Dept. of Speech Communication, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 244 Lincoln Hall, 702 S.Wright St., Urbana, Ill. 61801, USA. They should be in duplicate and should conform to the reference system set out in the Notes for Contributors, available from the Editors or Publishers. Reviews, and books for review, should be sent to Tim O'Sullivan, School of Arts, Leicester Polytechnic, P.O. Box 143, Leicester LE1 9EH; or to John Frow, Dept. of English, University of Queensland, St. Lucia, Queensland 4072, Australia; or to Jennifer Daryl Slack, Dept. of Humanities, Michigan Technological University, Houghton, MI 49931, USA.
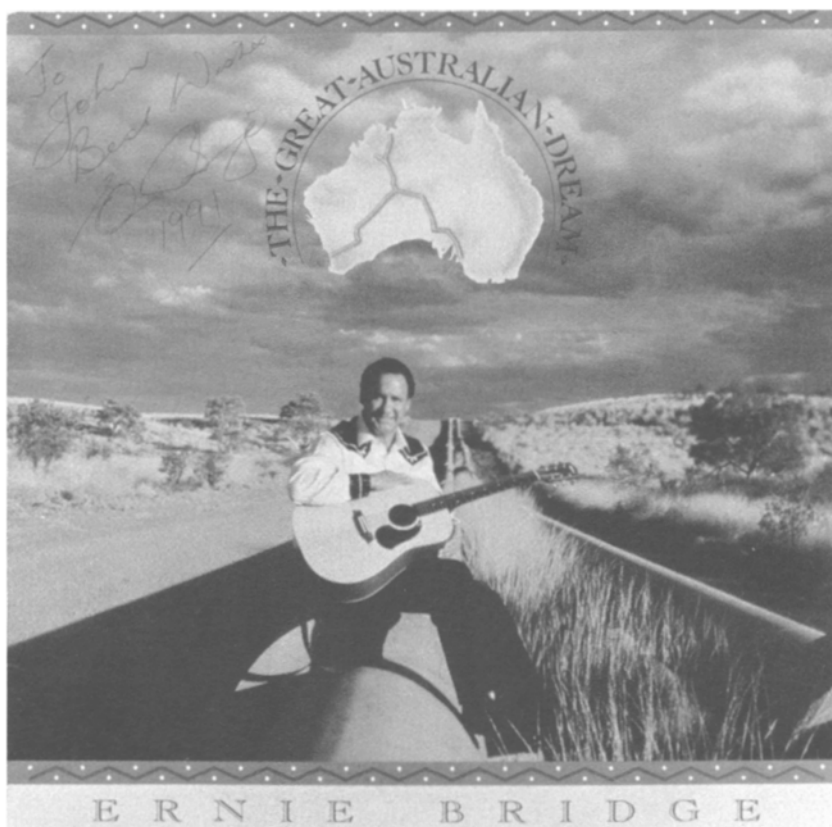
Frontispiece Ernie Bridge—'The Great Australian Dream' country music album/ cassette (see Preface). Available from the Hon. Ernie Bridge, 199 Flamborough Street, Doubleview, Western Australia 6018 (Aus $15 plus $3 postage).

CONTENTS

JOHN HARTLEY
PREFACE: 'DISMANTLING' FREMANTLE?

This issue of *Cultural Studies,* edited by Ien Ang and John Hartley, is devoted to papers which arise from an international cultural studies conference held in June 1991 and called, oddly, 'Dismantle Fremantle'. 'Dismantle Fremantle' had no deconstructive designs upon the fabric of the Western Australian port city; on the contrary, Fremantle provided an ideal venue for conference participants, as they thought about what 'dismantling' cultural studies might mean. This was odd too, since many of the participants were noted figures in the field of cultural studies itself—after all, one of the general editors, several of the founding editors, and an entire busload of the editorial committee of this very journal were in attendance. Dismantling that lot might prove difficult, involving more than a touch of Daliesque autocannibalism, if such participants really planned to dismantle the intellectual enterprise they had themselves helped to constitute. Why would anyone want to dismantle cultural studies anyway? It's hardly a lethal profession, given that most of those who profess it are marginal intellectuals in marginal institutions, hedged about on all sides by forces more powerful than they; on one side by the overgrown thickets of traditional academic disciplines, on another by an indifferent wall of incomprehension known as popular culture, and over there the philistine hordes of economic rationalists and political reactionaries. In such a landscape cultural studies is an upstart intellectual enterprise, about as threatening as the militarism of a toy soldier.

But there are those for whom cultural studies is not hedged but hegemonic. And Fremantle was an ideal venue to see what they meant. It is a port whose only international claim to fame during the year of 1991 was that it was used as an entrepôt f or an especially notorious case of arms smuggling, presumably on the basis that no one would notice, which they didn't at the time. In such a town, the goings on of Anglo-American cultural studies may have about as much local significance as the passage of a foreign ship bearing dangerous cargoes. More seriously, a particular brand of Anglo-American cultural studies has recently undergone a period of rapid capitalization in institutional, intellectual and publishing sectors, with major increases in productivity and a tendency to corner the market world-wide. As a port, Fremantle is clearly dedicated to two-way traffic; local commodities

from sheep to cultural studies, can be exported to the world, while valuable imports, from Toyotas to television, make their welcome antipodean landfall. So from here, questions of the terms of trade of the international intellectual economy take on a material force. Inequalities of international exchange, neglect of local differences in favour of standardization, and the question of whether Anglo-American dominance of the market is desirable or disastrous; such matters are hard to avoid in Fremantle. Do they apply to cultural studies as well as to container ships?

An ambiguous place, then, whose identity is far from settled, whose powers are not fully developed nor fully tested, and whose purposes are not unequivocally justifiable. Here, in the huge jarrah-wood 'A' Shed on the quayside of Fremantle's Victoria Harbour, in Fremantle's historic Town Hall, and in the former Boys' School, now Film and Television Institute of WA, 'Dismantle Fremantle' unfolded. Its ceremonial highlight was the visit of a cabinet minister of the Western Australian state government; but, in true 'Dismantle Fremantle' style, the Honourable Ernie Bridge, Minister of Agriculture, Water Resources and The North West, who is also the first Aboriginal cabinet minister in Australian history, a substantial property owner in the cattle-station country of the state's far north, and a well-known proponent of a utopian water-irrigation scheme, did not address us in any of these capacities. Along with his two sons Kim and Noel, he appeared in his equally famous capacity as a country-and-western singer, regaling us with his 'Great Australian Dream', which is a song, a reference to the destiny of his continental nation, and to the said water-irrigation scheme, all in one, harmonized on a guitar made in Fremantle of indigenous jarrah wood.

That was our ceremonial highlight, along with the appearance of Perth's best didgeridoo player, Richard Walley, and his troupe of traditional Aboriginal dancers, and the award-winning Aboriginal prison-poet Graeme Dixon, whose book *Holocaust Island* provided exactly the right accompaniment to the ceremonial Dismantle Dinner. Well, those were our applied cultural studies, our dismantling performances; cheering and perplexing our interstate and overseas visitors in about equal measure while the conference organizers spent the evening at the door arguing with two officers from the Liquor and Gaming Branch who were minded to take a dim view of the fact that we had sought to complete our participants' cultural education with the study of some indigenous wines, presented by the Wine Education Council of Western Australia. As the WA cabinet minister sang the praises of the state whose viticulture was being promoted to its distinguished guests, the forces of Law were proving to be as relentless, insensitive, and bloody-minded as several of the papers presented at the conference had already revealed them to be. Meanwhile, as the Law looked for grounds for prosecution, the conference organizers looked on helplessly, only to see, over the burly shoulders of the Repressive State Apparatuses, a departing concessionary conferee put a sizeable dent in the organizer's prized Chevy,

the very vehicle in which, en route from Perth airport eighteen months earlier, the idea for 'Dismantle Fremantle' was first hatched.

It was a perfect setting. Amid these experiential excesses, there were intellectual highlights too. Some of them are presented in the pages that follow. Some of them, alas, are not. But, for the record, here is the full list of papers.

Ang, Ien (Amsterdam University and Murdoch University, Western Australia): 'Hegemony in trouble: hazards of a postcolonialist Europe'.

Bennett, Tony (Griffith University, Australia): 'Useful culture'.

Chakrabarty, Dipesh (Melbourne University and Australian National University) 'Provincializing Europe: postcoloniality and the artifice of history'.

Chambers, Deborah (University of Western Sydney, Australia) 'Public and private images of women and suburban culture'.

Chen, Kuan-Hsing (National Tsing Hua University, Taiwan) 'Beyond the "audience": the masses, the schizos, and/or the historical subject'.

Chua Keng, Siew (Edith Cowan University, Australia) 'Australian screen: ethnocentricity, (multi)cultural studies and Asian (re)presentation'.

Craik, Jennifer (Griffith University) 'Accounting for fashion: cultural studies and the ephemera'.

Fry, Tony (Power Institute of Fine Arts, Sydney University) 'Being by design: here and there'.

Gibbons, Luke (City University, Dublin) 'Identity without a centre: nationalism in a postcolonial frame'.

Grossberg, Lawrence (University of Illinois at Urbana—Champaign, USA) 'Cultural studies: diaspora or bullish market?'.

Hartley, John (Murdoch University) 'Expatriation: the country and the critic'.

Hodge, Bob (Murdoch University) 'Opening statement'.

Jayamanne, Laleen (Power Institute of Fine Arts, Sydney University) *Love me tender, love me true, never let me go:* a Sri Lankan reading of Tracey Moffatt's *Night Cries'*.

Lucy, Niall (Murdoch University) 'Post/popular/culture'.

Mercer, Colin (Griffith University) '"Little supplements of life": cultural policy and the management of urban populations'.

Mickler, Steve (Murdoch University and Aboriginal and Torres Straits Islander Commission) 'Visions of disorder: Aboriginal people and the media'.

Mishra, Vijay (Murdoch University) 'Masculinity, stars, and narrative in Indian cinema'.

Morris, Meaghan (independent, Bundeena) 'Reflecting on mateship'.

O'Regan, Tom (Murdoch University) 'Two or three things I know about meaning…'.

Petkovic, Josko (Murdoch University) 'Dismantling the word'.

Ruthrof, Horst (Murdoch University) 'Closing statement'.

Sofoulis, Zoë (Murdoch University) 'The return of the expressed: ethnocentrism in psychoanalytic cultural critique'.

Stratton, Jon (Curtin University, Australia) 'Landscapes'.

Turner, Graeme (Queensland University) 'Of rocks and hard places: the colonized, the national and Australian cultural studies'.

Wark, McKenzie (Macquarie University, Australia) 'Perverse readings of the new world order: Meaghan Morris, cultural studies and antipodean theory'.

Webb, Hugh (Murdoch University) 'Jock Shandley's hat: continental cultural provocations'.

'Dismantle Fremantle' performances:

Country music: The Hon. Ernie Bridge, Noel Bridge and Kim Bridge.

Didgeridoo: Richard Walley. Dance: Middar Nyoongar Dance group.

Poetry: Graeme Dixon. Film/Video: Tracey Moffatt and Laleen Jayamanne.

'Dismantle Fremantle' was sponsored by the Communication Studies Program, the Asia Research Centre and the Centre for Research in Culture and Communication at Murdoch University, and by the Film and Television Institute of Western Australia, and supported by Desert Designs, Encore Productions, the 'A' Shed, Fremantle City Council. It was organized by Ien Ang, John Hartley, Niall Lucy and Zoë Sofoulis.

PS. For those of you who like narrative closure: prosecution was averted, order was restored, and so was the Chevy. As for cultural studies, the jury is still out—or so it seems from the dozen or so 'good and true' whose thoughts on the subject follow.

IEN ANG

DISMANTLING 'CULTURAL STUDIES'?
(by way of introduction)

On St Patrick's Day, 17 March 1992, Australian Prime Minister Paul Keating
—who has been keen on accenting his Irish family origins—once again
expressed his dismay at what he sees as Australia's failure to assert its
national identity. In his view, Australia could learn something from Ireland:
'We have got to be in this country like the Irish are, proud without being silly,
parochial without being unworldly, culturally secure without being culturally
arrogant'.[1]

Of course, Keating's comparison isn't exactly a happy one. Australia's
Irish connection is not an innocent one, certainly not in current debates about
'multicultural' Australia. Furthermore, although both Ireland and Australia
have been British colonies, Irish history is totally different from Australia's,
the latter being an immigrant society where what is left of the indigenous
population has been scandalously relegated to a position of utter
marginalization and deprivation, whereas the indigenous is precisely the
(symbolic) reservoir of much of contemporary Irish identity. In other words,
what is a source of self-esteem in Ireland, is a source of shame in (mainstream)
Australia. This serves only to point to one way that the historical construction
of 'Australian identity' is fraught with political, cultural and moral difficulties
rather different from that of 'Irish identity'. Still, Keating's remark is quite
incisive in pointing to one problem that both nations have in common: the
need to establish, maintain and assert themselves as relatively peripheral
entities in an international order where the centres of power and authority lie
elsewhere.

Keating's formula for Australia as a nation—the carving out of a space for
pride, parochialism and cultural security while avoiding silliness,
unworldliness and arrogance—reverberates quite prominently in Australian
cultural studies, as will be apparent from many of the articles in this issue of
Cultural Studies. Compiled here is a selection of (partly revised or entirely
rewritten) papers delivered at 'Dismantle Fremantle', an international cultural
studies 'confest' (conference in the style of a festival) organized by Murdoch
University and held in Fremantle, Western Australia, in June 1991.
What follows are some *partial*—in the double sense of the word—
observations about this selection of papers (and some of the themes raised by

them), which is? as Meaghan Morris rightly remarks, quite a different thing from the conference itself. In making choices for some intellectual trajectories over others, however, I do not want to invalidate any of the whole repertoire of positions and perspectives that cultural studies has been able to articulate and continues to articulate. Although cultural studies can hardly pretend to provide an 'ideal speech situation', fostering ongoing discussion may still be the best we have. This, at least, is one of the lessons of 'Dismantle Fremantle' IV an event which turned out to be an exploration in the problems—theoretical and political—of taking cultural specificity seriously. This does complicate my speaking trajectory here, given the fact that the exploration centred so much on doing cultural studies in Australia, as I write as someone who only recently chose Australia as her new 'home'—home in Meaghan Morris's definition: 'not a place of origin, but an "aspect" of a process which it enables […] but does not precede […] not an enclosure, but a way of going outside' (1991:454).

One of the explicit aims of 'Dismantle Fremantle' was to make a breach in what some see as rapidly solidifying orthodoxies within cultural studies. The use of Fremantle as a setting, within contemporary geopolitical relations 'a town at the end of the earth',[2] even within Australia, was designed as a geographical gambit to counter what Graeme Turner (1991:640–53), in his aim to cultivate a specifically *Australian* cultural studies, has called the universalizing tendencies in cultural studies, particularly British cultural studies.[3] In this sense, the comparatively marginal Australian perspective could provide the leverage—balancing on the thin line between pride and silliness, parochialism and unworldliness, cultural security and arrogance—to sensitize cultural studies as an international intellectual practice more fully to its own diverse and divergent conditions of operation and intervention in different locales and circumstances. At the same time Fremantle, sometimes advertised as the 'cosmopolitan' port city of the Perth metropolitan area, is also not that peripheral a place for cultural studies: it was around here that the forerunner of this very journal, the *Australian Journal of Cultural Studies* was established and produced for a number of years, before the board decided to let Routledge turn the publication into an international journal, entitled *Cultural Studies*—an interesting example of reverse diffusion indeed.

What is at issue then are the *terms* of the internationalization of cultural studies. A meaningful, critical internationalism, as Kuan-Hsing Chen remarks in his essay, can only develop if and when there is mutual acknowledgement of and serious engagement with the differences and diversity of 'our' specific investments in and inventions of 'cultural studies'. What is needed, therefore, is a *dismantling* of unifying and universalizing definitions of 'cultural studies', opening up a space for meaningful *conversation*. In this respect, 'Dismantle Fremantle' can be seen as a kind of talkback exercise in response to the largest international cultural studies gathering so far, the 'Cultural Studies: Now and the Future' conference held at the University of Illinois,

USA, in 1990. This conference brought together an impressive range of speakers who have made very interesting and useful contributions to the repertoire of work that can be subsumed under the label 'cultural studies', but the sheer ambitiousness, in scale and scope, of the Illinois conference has paradoxically evoked a sense of unease with a perceived 'Americanization' of cultural studies that the conference was seen to represent. And despite the fact that instances of outright cultural anti-Americanism (e.g., in relation to popular culture) have often been faulted in British and European cultural studies as a form of élitist, Eurocentric conservatism, for many the threat of cultural studies being appropriated and taken over by the Americans proves to be rather intolerable…

Quite certainly this would be an unintended effect of the conference, the organization of which was motivated at least in part by an understandable desire to put 'cultural studies' emphatically on the US academic agenda. But the very gesture toward comprehensiveness and prestigious authority displayed by the event—as articulated in the conference's title—has raised complex problems about its unwitting *politics*. For one thing, the book that emerged from the conference proceedings is bulky: 700-plus dense pages long. As it is simply titled *Cultural Studies,* it runs the risk of being read as an attempt at totalizing definitiveness, a politics of closure resulting in a hegemonic demarcation of what 'cultural studies' *is,* despite overt refusals in the pages of the book to come up with fixed or unified theoretical positions and agendas.

One often-heard complaint about US conceptions of critical intellectual work is that it tends to confine politics exclusively within the walls of academia[4] —a perspective fiercely opposed by many British cultural-studies workers, whose self-conception relies more on more socially embedded forms of intellectual struggle and activism. Stuart Hall, for example, has pointed out the danger that the very growth of, and emphasis on, 'theoretical fluency' in American cultural studies might lead to 'substituting intellectual work for politics' in the 'highly rarified and enormously elaborated and well-funded professional world of American academic life' (1991:286). One could add here that it is precisely theoretical fluency—rather than localized, historically specific, empirical work—which is most likely to be invested with international prestige and to travel well transcontextually. Needless to say then that rampant academicism—traditionally a privileged site of abstract internationalist objectivism—might only heighten the bias toward universalism that Turner, among others, has argued against.

Of course it would be misplaced to generalize about the (lack of) politics of cultural studies in the US in this manner. However, it is significant that Larry Grossberg (one of the organizers of the Illinois conference) in his talk at 'Dismantle Fremantle' located the political importance of cultural studies *precisely* in the context of what he saw as 'the diminishing possibilities for politics' in the USA. In fact, what was most interesting in Grossberg's talk

was that he was prompted to explicate the *specificity* of the conditions for doing cultural studies in contemporary America. In other words, the context of 'Dismantle Fremantle' gave Grossberg the opportunity to de-universalize his American speaking position. This is one way in which, as Turner has put it, 'cultural studies has a lot to gain from the margins' (1991: 650). It is from the perspective of the margins that 'the radically contextual, historically specific character of the production of knowledge within cultural studies itself' is most clearly illuminated ('Editorial', 1991).

Grossberg's emphasis on the increasing impossibility of politics in the USA is in fact a strategic starting point to stake out new (though admittedly limited) possibilities for politics—'impure" forms of politics—for critical intellectuals working within the academy (see Grossberg, 1988:66–9). If Grossberg's US speaking position is informed by a sense of limited possibilities, however, at the other extreme it is the felt *urgency* for politics in today's Taiwan which drives Chen's (dis)investment in cultural studies. A similar sense of political urgency is at work in Steve Mickler's critique of the coverage of Aboriginal 'crime' in Western Australian newspapers. It is in such cases that theoretical fluency in the purely academic sense becomes of secondary importance, although it is equally clear that neither Chen nor Mickler could have done without the necessary detour through theory enabled by the legacy of a few decades of cultural studies. In other words, theory *does* matter, not for its fluency *tout court* but for its potential to instil fluency in concrete understanding and analysis.[5]

It is within the field of theory that Tony Bennett's intervention in the so-called 'policy debate' is to be placed. In many ways, this debate *is* about the politics of cultural studies, or more precisely, about the political pull of the speaking positions that are and are not encouraged by the directions taken by the intellectual practices subsumed under the banner of 'cultural studies'. Bennett's theoretical rewriting of the history of 'culture'—less reliant on a reading of canonical texts and more on that of the multiple policy technologies aimed at the instrumentalization of 'culture' in the context of modern government—strikes me as a very useful one, particularly when taking into account, as Bennett himself indicates, the increasing dominance of English and its entrenched disciplinary privileging of (narrowly defined) textual analysis in cultural studies' academic institutionalization.[6] However, Bennett's argument against the 'moralized enunciative position' of the cultural critic in f avour of the more practical one of the cultural technician proved to be a rather controversial one at the 'Dismantle Fremantle' conference, a situation exacerbated by the ruthless *oppositioning* of critic and technician foregrounded by proponents of a policy orientation.[7] As if Foucault could have developed his insights about culture-as-technique without the adoption of a deeply committed, morally informed cultural-critical perspective in the first place! In other words, not only are cultural criticism and cultural policy by no means necessarily opposed to each other (on the

contrary, as Tom O'Regan shows, they often feed into each other and operate within the same social space, if at different planes); without a strongly developed cultural criticism a lot of cultural policy, with its inevitably positivist tilt, would drift into a sterile politics of pragmatism.[8]

My scepticism here is informed by experience in another context. Having lived in the Netherlands for a quarter of a century has predisposed me rather more ambivalently towards the presumed haven of well-managed social-democratic culture that the pro-policy lobbyists seem eager to buy into. In the Netherlands as well as in a number of other countries in Northwest Europe (where social-democratic visions of culture are rife), as I have remarked earlier in this journal (Ang and Morley, 1989), there is very little space for any critical intellectual engagement in cultural politics except within the constraining mould of 'relevance for policy', be it government policy or industry policy. The result has been a *de facto* hegemony of complacent, top-down, rationalist, and instrumentalist discourses of culture, an emphasis on 'cultural planning' which tends to treat as nuisance—or as downright superfluous—an inquiry into some of the 'irrationalities' (to use Zoë Sofia's inflection of this term) of the system. In the Netherlands this has been articulated, for instance, in a f ar more centralized, hierarchical, and rationalized academic research policy (accompanied by rigorous, state-induced, reorganizations within universities in the early to mid-eighties) than in Australia. It is my hunch that it is for these reasons that cultural studies as we know it has difficulty in thriving in these countries; it is simply too recalcitrant in its insistence, say, on the significance of unplanned forms of cultural struggle in the realm of the everyday, sometimes even as a *result*—unintended, to be sure—of certain policy measures. This is simply to indicate how imposition of a policy orientation, which is implicitly based on an unwarranted absolutist faith in the benevolent state, can ultimately lead to a poverty of critical discourse, unable (or unwilling) to take account of the multidimensional intricacies and contradictions of relations of culture and power in modern societies, thereby overlooking the 'other' side of the benevolent state: the repression and violence that underlie the idea of the modern nation-state, as both Dipesh Chakrabarty and Luke Gibbons emphasize. Against this background, I find the religious desire to impose policy relevance among some practitioners of cultural studies in Australia, to use John Hartley's term, rather astonishing.

We could even be more emphatic: in a time when the forces of global capitalism are becoming ever more totalizing, it is all the more important to retain a sense of iconoclastic 'negativism' associated with the critique of hegemony. Zoë Sofia's project to develop a psychoanalytic cultural studies on the basis of a politicized concept of sublimation is extremely compelling in this respect. For one thing, psychoanalytic discourse, the plague that Freud expected to bring to America on his first trip there, can provide us with one resource for reviving critical distance in the postmodern context through an

uncovering of the ever more refined repressions of the capitalist/ patriarchal/ Western unconscious. Contrary to the prescriptions of the pro-policy lobby (which amount to the adoption of a 'managerial imagination'), I think that cultural studies will continue to need for its own creativity the counterpoint of (historicized and contextualized) forms of what could be called the deconstructive imagination—it is one of its lifelines, a necessary underpinning of what Chakrabarty calls a 'politics of despair'.

What made 'Dismantle Fremantle' so special, in my view, was precisely that it provided an explicit context for the presentation and discussion of different trajectories of deconstructive imagining that can help dismantle, from the perspective of the margins, the universalisms of international cultural studies. So what is to be done if any genuinely critical internationalism is to be fostered in cultural studies—and we may have no choice in this age of increasing globalization, as Ken Wark suggests? From a specifically Australian perspective, how can the word 'international', to quote Meaghan Morris again, stop being 'a euphemism for a process of streamlining work to be "interesting" to American and European audiences'? (1991:456) It is within the margins that the serious *difficulties* of international communication—a longstanding central theme within anthropology (as well as in the transnational corporate world!) but still largely unacknowledged within cultural studies—are most urgently experienced.

Thus, Hartley's concept of astonishment describes the breakdown of communication when different speaking positions meet in what Morris calls 'bizarre non-encounters between incommensurable identities', and she usefully adds that they 'are made meaningful only by an effort to *do* something with the startling fact that they can occupy the same space.' (1991: 455–6) Indeed, astonishment has to be *made* useful.

It is clear that what needs to be done, first of all, is a scrupulous specification of those 'incommensurable identities', including the power relations that they enter into. However, if it is a specification of our respective speaking (and listening!) positions which is—minimally[9]—required for international conversation to make sense, then it would hardly suffice to take the national as a trusted and comfortable signifier for such a specification. Not only is what constitutes the national always subject to contestation, it is also the case that the national is always already 'contaminated' by the international.

This plight is especially strongly felt from the perspective of the marginal, the subaltern, the postcolonial. This is exemplified in differences in the key concerns which preoccupy Britain and Australia respectively, as mapped out by Hartley. As an historical centre of the international order, Britain (still) luxuriates in inner-directed concerns such as 'class' and 'quality', themes presuming an unquestioned plenitude of national self-identity, which according to Gibbons is characteristic of the classic European model of the nation-state: seen this way, the British problematization of 'class' and

'quality', including its take-up as central themes in British cultural studies, is understandable precisely in the light of a self-assured confidence in the very possibility of national perfection through intranational education and regulation.[10] On the other hand, the Australian themes identified by Hartley, 'identity' and 'exchange', reveal a fundamental tendency for the marginal (ized) to have to define its identity *in* exchange, as Meaghan Morris puts it. Marginalization makes any sense of a fully self-contained and internally cohesive identity impossible: the very boundaries of marginal identity are uncertain as it is under constant pressure of more powerful external forces which it has to come to terms with; it is, as Luke Gibbons shows in his essay on Irish nationalism, an 'identity without a centre'.

However, a fixation on one's own marginality can easily degenerate into inordinate self-righteousness, where the fact of being marginal itself is used as unproblematized source of comfortable resentment toward the 'centre'.[11] It is then, to resume Keating's fine distinctions, that pride and silliness are in danger of spilling into one another, when being parochial becomes an apology for being unworldly, and where the quest for cultural security can paradoxically end up in (reverse) cultural arrogance, triggered by an exclusive sense of 'uniqueness'—as we have seen in the recent explosion of reactionary nationalisms all over the world.

To be a truly de-universalizing force, therefore, the marginal should resist fixing itself in the nationalist frame (although there is nothing wrong with using the national as resource); instead, it should make the most of its own hybridity, much like in the 'antipodean' writing strategies that Wark uncovers in Morris's work. Since, as Wark says, the antipode is not a fixed space but a relational node, an antipodean perspective—'a question of moving tactically along one cultural trajectory and then off on another'—avoids reifying the marginal: instead, it *uses* the fact of marginality itself as the very weapon to (temporarily) overcome it. It therefore opens up the way for a resolutely antideterminist (although certainly overdetermined) concept of centre/margin relations.

This entails, of course, a nonabsolutist conception of marginality. As a dubiously postcolonial nation,[12] Australia may be positioned as marginalized in relation to the erstwhile imperial power Britain, to the post-war neo-imperialist power of the USA, and to the recent economic power of Japan, but it entertains much less unambiguous relations with other world regions and cultures. Its relation to the diverse nations of Europe, Africa and Asia, for example, could certainly not be described in terms of clear-cut centre/margin relations. One dimension that puts Australia resolutely on the side of the 'centre', for example, is that it is a predominantly white, English-speaking country, along with the advantages that this brings with it in the global framework.

Let me illustrate what this means by briefly describing another context, one that I happen to know well. The Netherlands is a country with a reputation

'where everybody speaks English'. And indeed, there is a peculiar tendency among the Dutch to take it for granted rather lightheartedly that no foreigner speaks their language. Therefore, they tend to mindlessly accept the necessity to learn other languages (predictably, those of the more central linguistic powers)—a situation which by those less enthralled with the blessings of affirmative internationalism (as significant parts of the Dutch middle class are) would easily be interpreted as an insidious form of cultural imperialism! I will not go into the complex contradictions confronting speakers of a minor language in an affluent Western country here; suffice it to point out that one of the greatest insults to hurl at Dutch people, in my view, is to casually compliment them that they speak English so well. Such 'flattery', while generally appreciated, is ultimately patronizing as it disregards the enormous effort (and the difficulty) that goes into learning to be fluent in a language other than the mother tongue.[13] It also tends to keep Dutch peculiarities at the convenient distance of 'otherness', relegated to the area of the inaccessible. As Abram de Swaan has put it, 'Nederlanders die zich tegenover buitenlanders noodgedwongen moeten uitdrukken in een vreemde taal lijken net iets trager, net iets dommer dan ze zijn. (Dutch people who of necessity have to express themselves toward foreigners in a foreign language appear to be just a bit slower, a bit more stupid than they really are [my trans.].)' (1991: 216) Of course, this is a problem that not only the Dutch face, but a very large part of the world's population.[14]

I am saying this partly as a way of articulating my protest against any easy designation of a homogenized Europe as purely and simply the metropolitan 'centre'. Not only do the boundaries between 'centres' and 'margins' shift; it is also the case that there are margins within any 'centre' and centres to any 'margin'. This doesn't invalidate Chakrabarty's project of provincializing 'Europe', on the contrary; in certain aspects this important project, in its attempt to deconstruct and demystify European modernity, may even be relevant to some of the more peripheral nation-states *within* Europe today, particularly in the postcommunist countries. The problem I am hinting at is the indolent kind of crude, sloganistic accusations of 'Eurocentrism' (as sometimes expressed by postcolonials) which often amount to nothing more than a form of 'counter-othering', based on as much ignorance about the actual realities of contemporary European societies as they (rightly) level against classic European attitudes to their own places. This doesn't mean that Europe isn't Eurocentric—in fact it is, and becoming more so in a rather troubling manner—but that modern Eurocentrism[15] should be *analyzed* in its concrete manifestations rather than merely imputed.

I come to the conclusion then that attention to the complex dynamics of heterogeneous second-world relations at the multidimensional interfaces of, say, Australia/Ireland, Australia/India, Australia/Taiwan, Australia/The Netherlands, and so on *ad infinitum*—to remain at the (problematically unspecified) national plane of difference—may be much more challenging

than the until now much more attended focus on postcolonial and/or imperial relations (with Britain and the USA particularly). Such little pursued trajectories of international conversation between partners without established, a priori hierarchies between and among them may bring about forms of novel and unforeseen cross-cultural knowledge.

In fact, my relatively brief Australian experience has already provided me with a more astute grasp on the peculiarities of living in a country such as the Netherlands than I have ever had before. So I recognize Meaghan Morris's difficulty in writing about the Australian ethic and practice of 'mateship' for an international audience, the constantly felt need to explain to others how 'we' do it, and so on.[16] In relation to Anglo-American intellectual practices— including cultural studies—Dutch work is at least as marginalized as Australian work, if not more so at a very basic level: the numerous courses on 'how to write an academic article in English' offered at Dutch universities are testimony to this. It is all the more peculiar, therefore, to realize that the typical Dutch response is one of disavowal of the predicament rather than of active recognition of it: one thing that Dutch culture pertinently *refuses* to see is its own contemporary marginalization—a case of severe cultural repression indeed. (The Netherlands' very identification with being part of 'Europe', aided by its peculiar geographical location, may be a source of the problem here: the resulting *unconscious* Eurocentrism, with its deeply ingrained historical self-confidence as the centre of the world, may actually *impede* a clear vision of the extent of the country's cultural marginality today.[17]) I could see this cultural peculiarity only, however, when I became familiar with the rather different ways in which a similar predicament is being dealt with in Australia.

If this—rather arbitrary—example of cross-cultural comparison teaches us something, then it is that surprising parallels can lie beneath equally imposing incommensurabilities. Such relatively uncharted trajectories of cross-culturalism thus bring up and enlighten a whole new spectre of (im)possibilities for meaningful international exchange, the terms of which we can only invent as we go along. This is the single most exciting insight that I acquired from 'Dismantle Fremantle'—both the conference and this issue of *Cultural Studies*. If cultural studies in the future can draw inspiration from this insight, then it can be home, an international intellectual home: a place where one can be proud to be parochial, but secure enough to avoid silly unworldliness—a place with no room for arrogance, so that one never stops going outside.

Notes

1 'Keating uses Irish example to raise flag issue', *The Australian,* 18 March 1992, p. 2.
2 As in the 'Dismantle Fremantle' flier, written by John Hartley.
3 See also Turner's article on this issue.
4 For example, in his *Crusoe's Footsteps: Cultural Studies in Britain and America* (1991) Patrick Brantlinger constructs a history of cultural studies as exclusively driven and determined by academic crises within the humanities and the social sciences.
5 And, therefore, struggle within academia does matter.
6 I particularly welcome Bennett's move away from purely textual theorizations of 'culture', which opens up the possibility for more genuine interdisciplinarity between traditions from the humanities and the social sciences.
7 Read paradoxically and perversely (in Ken Wark's terms), Bennett's intervention might in fact be refracted as a contribution to a more effective cultural *criticism*— one that goes beyond a preoccupation with the textual and is more fully engaged with social arrangements and technologies of 'culture'—rather than serving as a prescription for a wholesale 'turn toward policy'.
8 Of course, there are both good and bad forms of cultural criticism, as there are good and bad forms of cultural policy. To establish what is 'good' and what is 'bad' is itself a necessary undertaking for a (self-reflective) cultural criticism.
9 It may sound banal, but what is even more minimally needed in this respect is an attitude of simply *caring* for what is happening elsewhere. This is easier said than done: indifference not to difference as such but to the *specificity* of differences is rampant, as is exemplified in the figure of the transnational cosmopolitan.
10 Although Britain's entrance into the European community has brought to the surface a different, rather uncomfortable theme for the British: that of British marginalization.
11 This happens, for example, where Graeme Turner posits himself as 'victim' of the lack of attention to cultural specificity in British cultural studies (1991:652). A more productive image, because it recognizes the thoroughly ambiguous, mutually constitutive relationship between centre and margin emanating from the history of colonialism, is that of the 'complicit postcolonial', as developed by Bob Hodge and Vijay Mishra (1991).
12 The term 'dubiously postcolonial' to describe Australia comes from Meaghan Morris (in this issue).
13 In this sense, problems around the international unsaleability of the Australian accent, as in the film and TV industry, are really of a rather different order. A popular Australian soap opera easily appears on one of the main Dutch TV channels. On the other hand, a popular Dutch sitcom will at most have a chance to be shown on SBS, the fringe 'multicultural' channel, in Australia.
14 The little problematized hegemony of English is also reflected in our relative ignorance about the interesting developments in Latin American cultural studies, for example. See e.g., Alan O'Connor (1991).
15 Needless to say that there is Australian Eurocentrism too.
16 I had this problem, for instance, in having to explain the Dutch cultural formation of 'pillarization'. See e.g., *Desperately Seeking the Audience,* chapter 13.

17 Dutch colonial history is another entry for understanding here. In a sense, having been a world empire still informs Dutch cultural self-assuredness today: colonialist attitudes (just as patriarchal ones) die hard.

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• ARTICLES •

STEVE MICKLER

VISIONS OF DISORDER: ABORIGINAL PEOPLE AND YOUTH CRIME REPORTING[1]

On 28 February 1990 Western Australians awoke to a troubling headline across the front page of the State's major daily tabloid. On their way to work that morning, commuters passed posters, on the footpaths in front of suburban newsagents and on the corners of city streets, that reproduced, in large type, *The West Australian's* main news of the day: 'Aboriginal gangs terrorise suburbs' (fig. 1).

As far as Western Australian news media discourses about Aborigines go, the 'gangs' story, as it has come to be known, is the 'had to happen one day' story. For many years Aborigines in Perth have complained about what they believe to be incessant news media persecution.

These complaints have been voiced strenuously to the Royal Commission Into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, the Human Rights Commission National Inquiry Into Racist Violence, the Australian Press Council, the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal, not to mention the chiefs of newspapers, radio and TV news programs themselves. Anti-Aboriginal media stories have led Aborigines to establish an Aboriginal-Media Liaison Group with sympathetic journalists, to campaign for the removal of a particularly offensive radio commentator,[2] and have also given impetus to moves to set up Aboriginal-controlled radio stations in Perth and other towns. So Aboriginal people are by no means passive recipients of news media visions of themselves and broader issues of race relations and representation. Indeed, they have also become active participants in setting and influencing public agendas.

Aborigines are acutely aware of the power of news media to create or reproduce public knowledges about race relations, common senses about Aboriginality. Bitter experience has shown all too often how news media constructions of issues involving Aborigines establish the limits of what can and cannot be articulated about them, establish readerships positioned from within a consensus of common sense, and claim for these representations a truth grounded in an ever-present externalized power called 'public opinion'. However artificial it may be, 'public opinion' is for many Aborigines real enough, a thing which governments claim to be powerless in the face of, and thence they will not support Aboriginal land rights, not respect sacred sites,