

Cultural Studies and Africa: Excavating the Subject-Matter

Arnold Shepperson
Keyan G. Tomaselli

University of Natal, Durban, South Africa

This article examines some of the issues arising from the proliferation of cultural studies as a form of national-identity research. Looking at the case of the recent rise of culture studies in South Africa, we examine how certain items of received wisdom about cultural studies have obscured some of the academic dynamics that have actually driven the growth of cultural studies. In contrast with some of these aspects we consider cultural studies as a form of inquiry, driven by the reality of its subject-matter, and review some of the normative concepts that govern the communication of research findings. Based on C.S. Peirce's pragmatic conception of the logic of scientific communication, and on pragmatic trends arising among African writers like D.A. Masolo and Kwasi Wiredu, we consider just what has become the subject-matter of cultural studies. We offer an alternative formulation based in communication practice, and provide an example of how this was presented in conference on the African Renaissance. We conclude with suggestions about how cultural studies might recover its original radical democratic impetus in a world where socialism has lost much of its intellectual integrity.

In 1988, Ntongela Masilela wrote a Preface to *Rethinking Culture*, entitled "Establishing an Intellectual Bridgehead," in which he pays due respect to the British derivations of cultural studies. In addition he acknowledges the assistance they might give to establishing intellectual bridge-heads on the political terrains of South African and African histories. But intellectual references, he argued strongly, also need to come from within Africa itself. In 1988 these were few and

far between in South Africa. The 'nativization' of cultural studies in South Africa, Masilela suggested, would have to occur in the context of 'Africanization', which he describes as the re-orientation of intellectual and historical perspectives of cultural studies in terms of African cultural trajectories and history. Amongst the writers Masilela identified as contributing to Africanization are Nadine Gordimer, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Amilcar Cabral, Frantz Fanon, Aime Cesaire, Chiek Anta Diop, Joseph Ki-Zerbo, Charles van Onselen and A.C. Jordan. Masilela is furthermore not shy to include two additional South African authors even though their racial attitudes were possibly suspect: amongst the "originating moment of the formation of the peculiarities of our [South African] cultural studies", he states, are the writers Olive Schreiner and Laurens van der Post (see also Masilela, 1987).

In many ways Masilela's entry-point into cultural studies mirrors the historically accepted conception of "culture" as some form of canon, text, writing or "meaning-making mechanism" based on a characteristic literary form (or its equivalent where one is absent). Indeed, it is precisely the elevation of subaltern message reception, use and consumption to the status of a worthy academic subject-matter that sets apart the early "founding fathers" of cultural studies in Britain, Richard Hoggart, Edward P. Thompson and Raymond Williams. Clearly, therefore, it would appear that a similar maneuver applied to African and other globally subaltern forms of message reception and consumption would be sufficient to "nativize" cultural studies, weaning it away from its purported "Britishness". This may have worked to some extent in Anglophone environments like the United States, or Australia. But the simple transposition of the approach to the formerly subaltern peoples of the London Imperium has created some problems in the translation.

far between in South Africa. The 'nativization' of cultural studies in South Africa, Masilela suggested, would have to occur in the context of 'Africanization', which he describes as the re-orientation of intellectual and historical perspectives of cultural studies in terms of African cultural trajectories and history. Amongst the writers Masilela identified as contributing to Africanization are Nadine Gordimer, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Amilcar Cabral, Frantz Fanon, Aime Cesaire, Chiek Anta Diop, Joseph Ki-Zerbo, Charles van Onselen and A.C. Jordan. Masilela is furthermore not shy to include two additional South African authors even though their racial attitudes were possibly suspect: amongst the "originating moment of the formation of the peculiarities of our [South African] cultural studies", he states, are the writers Olive Schreiner and Laurens van der Post (see also Masilela, 1987).

In many ways Masilela's entry-point into cultural studies mirrors the historically accepted conception of "culture" as some form of canon, text, writing or "meaning-making mechanism" based on a characteristic literary form (or its equivalent where one is absent). Indeed, it is precisely the elevation of subaltern message reception, use and consumption to the status of a worthy academic subject-matter that sets apart the early "founding fathers" of cultural studies in Britain, Richard Hoggart, Edward P. Thompson and Raymond Williams. Clearly, therefore, it would appear that a similar maneuver applied to African and other globally subaltern forms of message reception and consumption would be sufficient to "nativize" cultural studies, weaning it away from its purported "Britishness". This may have worked to some extent in Anglophone environments like the United States, or Australia. But the simple transposition of the approach to the formerly subaltern peoples of the London Imperium has created some problems in the translation.

How does the "Britishness" that is perceived as the subject-matter of early cultural studies translate into the "Caribbean-ness" or "Indian-ness" and so on of the old empire's former territories? Indeed, one can look upon the concept of "culture" as itself rooted in the problems and solutions specific to the spiritual, intellectual, and material environments of the historical nations of Western Europe. On this reading, one should then consider constituting the study of the spiritual, intellectual, and material environments of African, Asian and other peoples as being the study of something other than Europe's notion of "culture". However, this places the very concept of a concept in some doubt, because essentializing some conceptual object in this way suggests that there are equally essential distinctions at the root of the human condition. It is a very short step from this to supporting the claim that peoples are different in a Kiplingesque way that leaves East as East and West as West with the twain never meeting. Obviously people do differ in their physical or incarnate characters, but there is simply no evidence with any scientific validity to make this kind of claim worth making in the first place.

Where do we then go with the concept of culture such that it becomes possible to make sense globally with the conception of cultural studies? Our previous work has often stressed the trajectories of South African cultural studies as a local phenomenon, at the expense of trying to understand just why in the contemporary global environment the field has developed the way it has. The institutional starting point was with the journal *Critical Arts* in 1980, which has undergone a few metamorphoses in its time (see Tomaselli & Shepperson, 2000), finally settling down at the Contemporary Cultural Studies Unit CCSU at Natal University. Changes in the political environment have permitted the field to take on a dif-

ferent role to its initial focus on anti-apartheid activism as popular culture, to seeking ways in which to engage critically with the forces of transformation that these changes had been expected to set in motion. The same processes have brought about more open relations with scholars in Africa, leading us to consider what sort of relevance cultural studies, as we have practiced in the field, has for the broader African developmental and intellectual environment (Tomaselli, 1998). Although these developments have led to the development of a variety of more or less fruitful linkages and affiliations to develop, global developments have tended to enforce a shift of focus away from previously accepted ways of viewing the actual object of cultural studies practice.

In this article we want to look at cultural studies as a form of inquiry based on the reality of some subject-matter, and the intellectual status thereof as being founded in the capacity for practitioners to *communicate meaningfully* about this subject-matter across a globally variegated range of spiritual, intellectual and material environments. First, however, we will take a brief look at some of the issues that have arisen from the initial engagement of cultural studies with Africa, taking special note of the kinds of discourses that have arisen between African philosophers and those practicing philosophy in Africa (Mudimbe, 1989; Masolo, 1994). We do this because of a number of highly influential standpoints that have developed within the African diaspora and among scholars in southern Africa (see *Critical Arts*, Volume 1999a, 1999b). One is the early work of Placide Tempels (1958) and his critics and followers (Mbiti, 1969; Kagame, 1956; Shutte, 1993). Another is the socialist-semiological work of philosophers who derive their work from structuralist and post-structuralist sources, the former including Paulin Hountondji (1983), the latter with a higher profile drawing on Valentin

Mudimbe (1989). Finally, there is a diverse branch that focuses on indigenous language "sagacity," more or less meshing the other two strands (Jahn, 1961; Hebga, 1982).

Our conclusion will be that although the early work of Tempels and his followers has had some influence on the rather Kiplingesque forms of Pan-Africanist thought, especially in the diaspora, its essentially scholastic underpinnings permit a somewhat more realist approach to culture to develop. Later writers like Augustine Shutte (1993) also promote an essentially neo-scholastic approach, based generally in the Thomist tradition. We will suggest a shift of emphasis from the Thomist to the Scotist, basing our approach on C.S. Peirce's inquiry as a form of community practice, defined by its communicational norms, which in turn are based in the reality of the discipline's subject-matter. On this basis we will make some suggestions about what might validly constitute the subject-matter of cultural studies. Our conclusion is that this is the special forms of *communication* that arise with inquiry into the "co-existence of persistence and change" (Williams, 1973, p. 347) in communities' spiritual, intellectual and material *conduct of life* as people locally and globally negotiate their relationships with new generations.

Culture: The Confusion of Concept, History, and Theory

Recent South African academic practice, emphasizing the hermeneutic-anthropological tradition stemming from writers like Clifford Geertz (1973), has to some extent circumvented the well-developed introversion of other cultural studies variants, by taking for itself the mantle of "South African Culture Studies" (Nuttall & Michael, 2000). In effect, this naming obviates the tendency for particular academic envi-

ronments to inherit the evolution of original cultural studies into a form of "critical British studies" (Higgins, 1999). Thus in Australia cultural studies has more and more delved into "post-coloniality" and "antipodean identity" to distinguish itself from the perception that their cultural studies is but a variation on the themes published by the Birmingham Center, Open University, Westminster University and many others in the UK. South African scholars are aware of this. In his ground-breaking study of Raymond Williams, John Higgins (1999) notes how Williams was aware of the basis of his scholarship in British (and especially English) concerns, not the least being just what distinguished "being-British" from "being-English". This has been equally found in the cultural studies tradition, but with the additional problem of how to constitute such kinds of identity-predicates after the Cold War. There is a far greater permeability of political, economic and infrastructural borders as globalized capital has gained the ascendancy, which has loosened many of the ties that previously bound not only individuals, but also corporations and commodities, to specific territories and the associated languages, currencies, industrial standards and employment practices (amongst other factors).

All these have a basic historical character rooted in individual national bodies, and the concept of culture originally evolved as a solution to the strains that such factors brought as they changed earlier agricultural or agrarian, often feudal or customary, relations in those territories. In the case of South African "culture studies" there is some awareness of this, but to be aware of something is not quite the same as factoring it into the broader social and political environment that constitutes "South Africa" under these conditions. One example worth examining in detail here is Robert Thornton's (2000) introduction to the cultural studies appropriation of the con-

cept of culture, composed as an introduction for a reader in culture studies. Thornton lays out the ways in which cultural studies in general (meaning British cultural studies) has built on the senses in which different periods and disciplines have mobilized the concept of culture. He relates the various appropriations of the concept to what he considers to be the base formulation, that of Edward Tylor in 1873 (Thornton, 2000, pp. 35-38).

One leg of Thornton's approach to culture is therefore to see it as "the collection of customs, traditions, unwritten laws, and lifeways of all of humanity in all its cultural variants" (2000, p. 37). The other leg is based in those forms of cultural writing that form the origins of or are susceptible to re-articulation under the concept of "discourse." These essentially derive from the ideas of national genius embodied in the individual, based on the work of the Romantic Poets: Wordsworth and Coleridge in England, and Goethe in Germany (Thornton, 2000, pp. 37-38).

For Thornton, the concept of culture as such comes onto the scene only with Tylor's work, although its origins lie in the roots of western philosophical thought, in the "ironic belief that all cultural and social reality is always just what it is but also always somehow other than it seems" (2000, p. 34). However, the first concrete conceptual components of cultural theory only develop after the Westphalian settlement (1648), as writers like Adam Smith and the French physiocrats began to elaborate theories of political economy to explain the wealth of nations in terms that do not rely on divine intervention (Thornton, 2000, pp. 34-35). The upshot of this is that the concept of culture emerges alongside theories proposed to explain wealth and power in terms of forces that are independent, but that the institutions that govern them are constructed within relations of power that are historical or

contingent (Thornton, 2000, p. 35). Culture, in short, is based on the national idea, with all the historical and political baggage that has grown with the idea as it has been appropriated in the aftermath of the modern imperial period. In terms of the actual theorists that influenced the intellectual discourse within which cultural studies developed, Thornton (2000, p. 38) cites Malinowski and Foucault as being decisive, with their common inspiration in the thought of Friedrich Nietzsche:

Malinowski wrote about culture in non-Western small-scale societies, and Foucault wrote about modern European society. They agree that language and cultural action of all types are intrinsic to social power, and that social power exists not only in the office of kings and the bureaucrats of the state, but rather (sic) in the minutiae of everyday life, especially in ritual, custom, and practices of the ordinary. Nietzsche had shown, in his trenchant critique of European morality, sexuality, art, music, and language that social power is to be found in the conventions of their everyday existence, in that they were taken for granted in their businesses, churches and entertainment. Nietzsche was, emphatically, not a sociologist or observer of anyone's daily existence, but his insight into the cultural framework of compulsion, desire and power is perhaps the most powerful set of ideas of their time, untimely as they were. The focus of cultural studies today is still precisely where scholars such as Nietzsche, Malinowski, or Foucault directed it: on the culture of the popular, the ordinary, the everyday, and the 'normal', and it seeks to show how these practices discipline or shape our existence (Thornton, 2000, p. 29).

With the growing recognition that the concept of the nation is deeply flawed, so some like Raymond Williams, toward the end of his life, began to suspect that culture, based in the emergence of the national idea, was also flawed. Yet cultural studies has, as Thornton (2000, p. 40) notes, continued to consider culture, as the complex of power relations that shape the ordinary and the popular, as an orientive idea for explicating not only meanings, but also the contestation of meanings "related to each other in a complex manifold of meanings and values that is relatively independent of their

temporal sequence." Given, though, that the original cultural studies project, the Birmingham Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies (BCCCS), was based in the evolutionary and materialist Marxist tradition, Thornton (2000, p. 41) acknowledges that the twenty-first century's version of cultural studies has become essentially static and ahistorical. The dissolution of the national idea has, as Thornton puts it (2000, p. 42), left in its place "much wider, but also much more nebulous, notions of 'culture' and 'discourse.'" Earlier tendencies to view cultures as Malinowskian bounded wholes leading to political tendencies like Nazism, apartheid, and Lenin's nationalities policy, have led to such notions of culture becoming anathema to many (Thornton, 2000, pp. 39-42).

But cultural studies still persists with the study of *differences*, often at the expense of *inequalities* between class and gender groupings. This is justified on the grounds that culture is as much a creative as it is a coercive force, riddled with cognate paradoxes of the bounded and the dissolved boundary, the stable and the fluid, and so on (Thornton, 2000, pp. 43-44). To some extent, this can be offset by stressing the coincidence of cultural studies' lack of conceptual grounding with the parallel lack of political, economic and social anchors so noticeable in post-ideological political and economic development. Thornton does not make any specific endorsement of these developments, although he does note the "indispensability" of these indeterminacies in making sense of hybridity and diasporic consciousness in displaced communities. However this does not quite dispel Thornton's further acknowledgment that perhaps Raymond Williams may have been right when, late in life, he expressed the fear that cultural studies had become a:

... vague and baggy monster, ... but we can define it more closely, as media studies, community sociology, popular fiction or popular music ... Yet I do

wonder about the [academic] courses where at least the teachers, and I would say also the students, have not encountered the problems of the... tension between that social history of forms and these forms in contemporary situations with their new and partly old content (Williams, 1989, pp. 158-159, cited in Thornton, 2000, p. 46).

This late concern of Williams echoes his earlier (1973, p. 347) characterization of the recurring themes of country and city in English literature as a parallel concern with attempts to reconcile what he called "the permanent tension between persistence and change" in the trajectories of modern industrial social experience. Indeed, that which persists, as in some kind of quasi- or pseudo-Romantic 'genius' in early cultural theory, cannot be dismissed merely on the grounds that what one says *in language* about this is merely the contingent or arbitrary relation of signifier to signified. Aside from some rather corny mistakes in the details of cultural studies' origins, Thornton misses some rather more cogent factors in the philosophical origins of cultural studies. We will deal with the latter, for example, Thornton's wholesale exclusion of the alternatives possible in the scholastic realism that modern philosophy has rejected in favor of a whole raft of nominalistic "vague and baggy monsters" of which Nietzsche and his followers are but one relatively minor trend later, for the present drawing attention to a few things that betray a perhaps too hasty approach to the job of producing his chapter.

In the first instance, although Thornton is himself a noted anthropologist, he fails to mention the influence of Alfred Kroeber and Talcott Parsons (1958). These two, an anthropologist and sociologist respectively, made the crucial and decisive conceptual decision that 'culture' was to refer not to any of the subject-matter of sociology. The important point here is that their "concordat" (Harris, 1979, p. 280) effectively removed from the notion of culture any reference to material or behavioral vectors. These, which were central to

Taylor's earlier definitions, Kroeber and Parsons decided were proper to the subject-matter of sociology (Harris, 1979, pp. 281-282). They further suggested that:

... it is useful to define the concept of culture for most usages more narrowly than has been the case in the American anthropological tradition, restricting its reference to transmitted and created content and patterns of values, ideas, and other symbolic-meaningful systems as factors in the shaping of human behavior and the artifacts produced through behavior (cited in Harris, 1979, p. 281).

Effectively, the limitation of the subject-matter of cultural anthropology to the mental or idealistic dimension flew in the face of Taylor's original formulations. Taylor had originally written that to study culture is to examine the "complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, habit, art, law, morals, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society" (cited in Harris, 1979, pp. 278-279). Taylor saw the tools and artifacts, and the way that societies used them, as central to the cultural make-up of these societies, collecting and studying "hand shuttles, crossbows, blowguns, drills, screws, water wheels, and other instruments, tools and weapons" (Harris, 1979, p. 279). Thus Raymond Williams' focus on the material as well as the symbolic in a whole way of life was hardly as out of date in 1958 as Thornton (2000, p. 38) has indicated.

Secondly, Thornton (2000, p. 36) dates cultural studies as a "named movement" from the time that Stuart Hall (1981) merged the culturalism of the "leftist historians E.P. Thompson, Richard Hoggart and Raymond Williams" with the "modified Marxism of Antonio Gramsci" and adding the "third paradigm" of Foucault's power/knowledge discourse theories. This is simplistic, if not downright wrong. Firstly, the only historian among the three he names was Thompson; both Hoggart and Williams were literary scholars by train-

ing, even if their working class origins may have inclined them politically toward the historical *methods* of Marxism. At the time of cultural studies' "naming", only Hoggart was a career academic, both Williams and Thompson being active in the adult education sphere (Williams accepting a professorship at Cambridge only *after* Hoggart's rise to prominence with the establishment of the Birmingham Center). Thus Thornton's further claim (2000, p. 35) that "cultural studies first took shape around the work of a group of British Marxist sociologists" further ignores the facts *and* contradicts his other statements. It is a matter of record that the "group of Marxist sociologists" of the BCCCS was comprised of social anthropologists, literary scholars, historians and a variety of other practitioners. All were in a sense united under Hoggart's vision of what the meshing of disciplines could achieve in elevating the methods of criticism to that of scientifically valid inquiry. This leads to a further lack of attention to detail, which in even a short piece like the chapter under consideration here should have been acknowledged: the fact that Williams began his sustained and critical confrontation with the language of 'culture' right after his return from service in World War II. By the time his first independent monograph, *Culture and Society* appeared in 1958, Williams had thus spent a decade of research on the concept in the literary and critical canons. It was simply the accident of Hoggart's *Uses of Literacy* appearing a year before in 1957 that led many to see both as contributing to what only much later even began to take on the appearance of an autonomous intellectual movement. Williams certainly was never consciously engaged with 'establishing' cultural studies, and indeed only met personally with Hoggart after obtaining tenure: both were unlikely to be invited to appear at the same conference because Williams was not in the academic loop until much later (see Jones,

1994, p. 394).

What our focus on these apparently minor issues is intended to show is that for all intents and purposes the South African "culture studies" tendency has not gone beyond the by-now canonical genealogy of cultural studies in British academic circles that is itself a truncated and much-abridged representation. As early as 1998, the US-based Kenyan scholar Handel Wright unearthed a considerable body of cultural work that follows the trends Thornton ascribes to the 1980s and after, that had been going on in diverse places long before the establishment of BCCCS. It is hard to understand why Thornton, obviously commissioned to provide the theoretical background for the collection in which his chapter appears (Nuttall & Michael, 2000), failed to incorporate these developments. Almost all of them were already established before the 'culture studies in South Africa' movement began, and had indeed been cited in other work (Tomaselli, 1998; Tomaselli & Shepperson, 2000; Shepperson, 1997). Yet the tendency for partial reference to historical developments is not just a problem with cultural studies: in the next section we will look at some appropriations of philosophy in Africa in which there are similar exclusions.

Appropriation or Indigenization? Africa Looking at the West Looking at Africa

Some people have wondered whether Western-educated Africans (whether educated in the West or at Western-oriented African universities) have sometimes championed the cause of Western perspectives better than Westerners themselves might have done (Makgoba, 1997). With some exceptions, discussion with a cultural studies orientation, especially in South Africa, tends to be conducted almost exclusively

within frames unproblematically imported from French, British or U.S. approaches, while nevertheless claiming an African emphasis in the titles of such books and articles (Van Staden, 1996; see also Shepperson, 1997). Another import is the American notion of intercultural communication, where there is at least an attempt at theoretical indigenization. However, appropriations of this paradigm must address two crucial issues that are part of the background to its earlier deployments: a) South African intercultural theory which during apartheid placed white Afrikaners on the inside and everyone else on the outside (Tomaselli 1992); and b) the rather superficial attempts to universalize and mobilize concepts like the Zulu code of conduct, *Ubuntu* ('I am because we are'), to renegotiate the inside-outside equation from the Afrikaner Other to an African Same. The effect in both cases is to legitimize the ideologies of business: during apartheid in terms of black-white labor relations; and in the post-apartheid era in terms of a psychological search for multi-cultural belonging, social, business and labor harmony (Steyn & Motshabi, 1996; Ngidi, 1997).

In its extreme form, the indigenization argument maintains that theories and approaches developed at the metropolises are irrelevant for Africa. This critique is, in many respects, hard to refute. This is because theory, like other forms of writing, has intimate relations not only with the language in which it is written, but also with the particular structures and struggles of societies. This argument, however, under-estimates the extent to which many African nations are modern capitalist states, and the extent and degrees to which they have moved along the path of modernity (Muller & Tomaselli, 1990, p. 302).

Cultural studies in Africa begins with the criticism of an image of Africa developed historically over 400+ years of interaction (Pieterse, 1992). Not only is this a "western" im-

age, as Pieterse and others show (for example Mudimbe, 1989, and Hickey & Wylie, 1993); it also finds currency in African thought. Africanist thinkers in the diaspora tend to hold, on the other hand, that any image of Africa is a purely European construct (Mudimbe, 1989). This has given rise to some African scholars and politicians resenting their status as Other, encouraging the construction of an alter ego – an essentialist identity developed in opposition to exploitation by the Western Same. But does the long colonial relationship consist purely of a relation of *exploitation*? The record shows that many kinds of relationship, ranging from paternalism, through cultural cross-pollination, adaption, and assimilation to exclusion and segregation, became strategies of interaction adopted within different spheres at different times. Sometimes one of these has been a major imperial strategy, as the example of assimilation shows in the existence of linguistically-defined Francophone, Arabophone, Anglophone and Lusophone regions etc. Essentialist analytical frameworks bracket out the 'surplus value' associated with these realities, leading to what sometimes reads as a form of fascism.

The questions to be asked of Africanists are: what attraction is there in adopting the image of 'exploitation' as the sole relation between Africa and the West? What is gained, and in what terms – politically, socially, or logically – by removing this 'surplus value' from the equation? A reductive vision of this kind does little justice to the pluralistic and vibrant communities in which people see themselves as members of a particular community first and African second. That people's spiritual, material and intellectual resources can indeed serve as weapons in the resistance against certain contemporary hegemonic practices is not to be ignored simply because these resources do not conform to some one-dimensional or reductive conception of what the "African-ness" of

these ought to be.

The value of the cultural studies paradigm as bequeathed by the Birmingham Center and its various reconstitutions internationally is its sustained engagement with the reality that meanings *grow*. People's communities and allegiances are constantly being reinvented and reconstituted both from within and without. In the contemporary world it requires extreme measures, moving into the realms of political totalitarianism, for any people or nation to insulate themselves completely from the rest of the global environment. The experiences of states like Burma and apartheid South Africa show fairly conclusively that such self-exclusion is unsustainable in the long run. Exchanges are always likely to occur through the myriad potential encounters they can have with travelers of all kinds. These can range from academics, politicians, and *griots* (bards); through media, education, and transnational border information and trade flows; to the World Bank, UNESCO, and the International Monetary Fund.

What is clear is that meanings and signification as the basis of *culture* always require some form of *communication* for them to grow and be made open to negotiation. At the core of the topic lies the contradiction that effectively distinguishes culture from ideology. Where the concept of culture is rooted in the basically conservative notion that identities entail some persistence or continuity of communities' characteristics in the face of change, ideologies of all stripes *deny continuity*. What underpins all essentialisms, 'Pan-movements' in Africa, India, among Slavs, Germans, or whatever, is the vociferous claim that they are *not-bourgeois*. Yet this drives all essentialist approaches to culture into a very industrial and Western political discourse: the eighteenth century dichotomy between the city and the country (Williams, 1973, p. 347). At the end of the day, all societies which have been

based on such ideologies have had consequences that are both tragic and embarrassing. Tragically, this discourse becomes realized in states like Nazi Germany's Nazis, the Khmer Rouge's Cambodia, and South Africa's apartheid state. Rwanda's ethnic cleansing and Algeria's supposedly religious/secular holocaust are other examples where essentialism has motivated movements to the limits of humanity. Philosophers and cultural studies practitioners celebrate culturally intricate hermeneutics, only to end up embarrassingly like Martin Heidegger, trapped in a romantic web of agrarian values which cut them off from the global *city* which has evolved over two-and-a-half centuries.

All this suggests is that there is another problem facing any kind of initiative to determine what it might be that is the subject-matter of Cultural Studies in Africa. This is that just about every form of philosophical approach other than those grounded in anthropological and discourse paradigms that Thornton identified, must somehow avoid the stigma associated with its origins in the traditions claimed by the industrialized world. Africans "doing philosophy" in Africa have often come to grief because whatever conceptual or logical approach they take runs into problems of, unsurprisingly, justifying its cultural authenticity and/or its validity within the oral discourses of African societies. On the one hand, *Bantu Philosophy* (Tempels, 1952), the document that many accept as the original sustained attempt to make philosophical sense of African people's experiences in Africa, is frequently dismissed for its origins as essentially a missionaries' handbook. Tempels, for many years active in the missionary field in the then Belgian Congo, drew on his understanding of some of the local languages to identify certain connecting semantic and narrative threads. As a linguistic exercise this was hardly earth-shattering; what he did with this, however, was to pro-

pose that there is a certain hierarchical ontology implicit in these languages that calls into question the primacy of objective thought. Leaving aside the controversy that erupted over this in Europe, the reception of Tempels's proposal among Africans has ranged from enthusiastic to outright rejection as "ethnocentric". On the other hand, as D.A. Masolo (1994, pp. 29-36) points out, not only Tempels's categorical schema but also much in the logical and metaphysical objections to it, are rooted in the specific debates of Continental philosophy at the time of Heidegger and Jean-Paul Sartre. Many of Tempels's followers sought to moderate the perceived Aristotelianism or Thomism in his work (Kagam, 1956), while others sought to mesh this with wider considerations of African religious experience (Mbiti, 1969). Among the dissenters one finds Hegelians, some with Marxist leanings (Hountondji, 1983); Oxbridge trained analytical philosophers with pragmatist leanings (Appiah, 1986; Wiredu, 1980), and a range of alternative anthropologically informed approaches that, for all that they are sympathetic to the conception of a different linguistic structure for African language, seek to ground African thought in indigenous epistemology (Hebga, 1982; Odera Oruka, 1991).¹

However the various schools of thought may approach the topic, they all have in common the problem of how African people's experiences can be *communicated* in the context of failed development and modernization programs. If we take the broad view of communication as semiotically coherent exchanges governed by norms and tending to the accomplishment of some end, then D.A. Masolo's endorsement of Kwasi Wiredu's gloss on the relation between Africa and modernity is highly relevant:

Admittedly, there is a place for intuition and emotion in life. Life is not all logic. But this kind of point is often covertly taken as an excuse for being

unmindful of logic and rational procedures generally; as if from the fact that life is not all logic it follows that it is not logic in any part at all. On the contrary, it is as true in Africa as anywhere else that logical, mathematical, analytical, experimental procedures are essential in the quest for knowledge of, and control over, nature and, therefore, in any endeavor to improve the condition of man. Our traditional culture was somewhat wanting in this respect and this is largely responsible for the weaknesses of traditional technology, warfare, architecture, medicine, etc. There can be little doubt that many of the hardships of traditional life were, and still are traceable to this cause (Wiredu, 1980, p. 12, cited in Masolo, 1994, p. 224).

It is precisely because the forms of communication that *constitute science*, in the sense that logic and its guiding norm of *truth* govern such communication (Peirce, 1998, pp. 58-59; pp. 85- 86; pp. 130-131; p. 197), are intended to guide future generations' capacities to overcome the hardships of their inherited life-worlds, that cultural studies must generally find its roots in the means and norms and logic of such communication. The findings of the sciences that Wiredu enumerates are themselves semiotically coherent exchanges with some indefinite future audiences, some or many members of which may seek further to test these findings in the context of their inherited life-worlds, *which by definition of their future reality will not be the same as ours.*

Coming Home:

Cultural Studies as a Communicational Practice

Thus the fundamental subject-matter of cultural studies is not the reality of logical operations, mathematical constructs, analytical categories, or experimental methodologies *as such*, but of the logic, constructs, categories and methodologies associated with communication with an indefinite audience in an indefinite future. Why should this be the case? Well, we can begin by returning to Thornton's (2000, p. 38) take on the history of the concept: its appearance in Matthew Arnold's

definition as a "form of political intervention, albeit in a conservative direction." Thornton suggests that Arnold's conception of culture is aimed at halting "progressive socialist" changes during an unsettled period of British politics. The problem here is that Arnold's definition of culture as the "best that has been thought and written" is not in itself a definition of *culture*, but of the *indicators of cultural accomplishment* to which a society can appeal in defining its culture. The "best that is thought and written" is being defined as a communication from the past; culture in itself, then, is associated with the practice of harnessing these communications practices to communicate itself to future generations.

How does this occur? And to whom is this communication directed? Scientific communication is, as Peirce said, always addressed "To Whom It May Concern" within an indefinite community of inquiry (see Ransdell, 1998). But even if the findings of cultural studies inquiry is so addressed, this doesn't tell practitioners about who is to be addressed in the communication of *culture*. "Conservatives" like Matthew Arnold and J.S. Mill were stressing that this communicational conduct occurs between those who are active members of a society, and those seeking to become active in that society. This does not mean that there is a specific cultural elite the business of which is to pontificate the best that has been thought and written. It does mean that the active generations in a society must communicate with the new generations in ways that ensure that the ends of this communication become realized in conduct that is directed toward further ends that are guided by the norms of truth, goodness and beauty. This is, despite being all that culture is about, the task upon which societies succeeded or failed in modernity. As the social and political boundaries of modernity shift because of the expansion of communication limits because of developing technologies,

so the guiding norms of truth, goodness and beauty, the great regulative ideas of philosophy, must take account of ends that transcend the national ends, the being-British of early cultural studies, in order to discern ends that accommodate humanity globally. The intended recipients of culture now inhabit a globe, and cultural studies must recognize that one can only be-National *consequent to one's being-human*.

The irony of all this is that just when Africa recovered the voice that enabled its peoples to add their claims to be-African alongside all the other claims, of those experienced at being-British, French, American, and so on, so the social and political structures that lent legitimacy to these claims have become fuzzy, amorphous, and porous. Cultural studies in Africa, therefore, must strive to communicate just this, that it is offering for review and criticism the findings of cultural inquiry in Africa and should no longer strive toward the insularity of nationalized cultural studies elsewhere. The communicational task is to open the way for communicating about what it means to enable new generations to conduct themselves under the guidance of ends defined by globally recognizable norms of Truth, Goodness and Beauty. Logicians, ethicists and aesthetic specialists can communicate about the purport of these value ideas, but they are not themselves the subject-matter of cultural studies. The principal subject-matter of cultural studies is communicating *about the communication* of accomplishing forms of conduct that will be guided, however minimally, by these kinds of norms.

Cultural studies as communication is, in other words, a form of pragmatism. From African thinkers like Masolo (1994, p. 207) the field can build on a conception of cognition that includes the understanding that "to know is to apprehend the future as qualified by values" which become realized in the conduct of individuals and communities. This way of under-

standing the results of inquiry is, as Masolo (1994, p. 207) notes about Wiredu, "in the control it gives us, through appropriate action, over the quality of our future experience." To some extent, then, the ends of culture and the ends of the inquiry of cultural studies overlap. But the immediate need to develop a new generation's endowments into talents (Heller, 1987, pp. 302-315) involves a different objective to that of the communication associated with cultural studies inquiry. The latter is guided by the abstract norms of logic, ethics and aesthetics (Peirce, 1998, pp. 371-397) with a view to an end that is always only potentially present but none the less conceivable in the present. The object of the former is embodied in ends that are more actual, in the form of the members of the generation under development, and the logic, ethics and aesthetics of this conduct are subject to the contextual needs of the particular relationship.

This recalls the scholastic distinction between formal and practical logic (*logica docens* and *logica utens*), where Masolo's (1994, p. 210) reminder is therefore applicable:

The all-important point that needs to be noted is that problems of contemporary society must be dealt with in accordance with contemporary procedures of knowledge. In our view, this kind of reasoning embodies relativism. Furthermore, there is nothing incompatible about holding a relativist thesis in regard to the instrumentalist role of reason while also holding to a rigid objectivist or realist thesis in the areas of science. The combination of the two, in any case, makes the world of experience.

Masolo comes close to endorsing a sort of pragmatism here, even if there is a somewhat degenerate *realpolitik* quality about it. But there is another way of looking at how the capacity to use the technologies Masolo identifies, also pragmatic, but rooted more in the logic of things and the norms that precede logic. Technologies of war and administration do not work in the absence of some element of their users'

understanding being rooted in the practical ends attainable by means of the embodiments of these technologies, whether as weapons or as institutions. These endure beyond the mortal span of their users, and in many respects it is their reality as *means* that determines what constitutes the right and wrong way of reaching the ends that their use can accomplish. If one generalizes a bit from this, we begin to tread on the ground laid by Peirce (1839-1914) with his version of scholastic realism, meshed with the mild nominalism of the sciences in the logical doctrine he called *pragmatism*.

Culture and the Logic of Institutions: A Different Semiotic Exchange

In general, the cultural studies field has tended to take it more or less for granted that its tradition is based on the choices available between existing philosophical approaches. In many ways, cultural studies practitioners recognize that their field, as a specialized form of inquiry, must draw on the resources of philosophy while not in itself producing texts or performing philosophical analysis, criticism, or synthesis. But the resources available are not quite as restricted as Thornton makes them out to be. When Tempels drew on scholastic conceptions of reality to develop his system of African or Bantu categories, he drew on a tradition that many are turning to in an effort to break the sterility of the analytic versus hermeneutic options that seem to dominate the resources cultural studies draws upon. Augustine Shutte (1993) draws on the tradition of Teilhard de Chardin to make the case that Neo-Thomism provides the most relevant basis for philosophical inquiry in Africa. This position has considerable merit, precisely on account of its cognitive affinity with Tempels' approach. It does open up the possibility of simply redrawing

the battle-lines between traditions that we have already noted. What sets the pragmatist version of neo-scholasticism apart, however, is that it uses a development of the long-neglected realism of Duns Scotus not only to simplify the system of logical categories, but also to propose and defend a conception of reality that enables a more scientifically acceptable logic for critical inquiry in the cultural studies mold.

Peirce developed an approach to logic that a century after his death still yields rich ore for the inquirer into topics based on what the critical philosophy tradition calls value-rational reasoning. What the conception of culture as a form of communication directed at developing new generations' endowments into talents permits, is to consider just what is beautiful and good about the potential conduct of these generations in the context of conceivable forms of life in a changing world. For the ends of cultural studies inquiry, the proposal that the ends of culture are embodied in the future generations' development of endowments into talents adds a further dimension to Peirce's conception of truth. In this conception, *the plurality of conceivable truth contexts* permit different kinds of truths:

... the different kinds of sciences deal with different kinds of truth; mathematical truth is one thing, ethical truth is another, the actually existing state of the universe is a third; but all these different conceptions have in common something very marked and clear. We all hope that the different scientific inquiries in which we are severally engaged are ultimately going to lead to some definitely established conclusion, *which conclusion we endeavor to anticipate in some measure*. Agreement with that ultimate proposition that we look forward to, agreement with that, *whatever it may turn out to be*, is the scientific truth (Peirce, 1998, p. 87 – emphasis added).

In some measure this emphasis on truth as something we reach through inquiry, whatever it may turn out to be, can restore to cultural studies, in Africa and globally, the critical

impetus that marked the socialist-progressive agenda of the field's first British incarnation. The truths about the present, ethical, mathematical, the state of the universe, *and culturally*, are only part of the truths that inquiry ultimately may reveal, no matter how unexpected. That many truths in the present are indeed true can be established by research; that they could change because of conditions yet to come about in the future is where the import of social and cultural inquiry is relevant.

We build our institutions on the understanding that the ends of these institutions will meet needs arising from the accomplishment of other ends. It is far too apparent that what we take to be understood sufficiently well at present in our social and cultural institutional environment, can in fact fail to meet the needs of generations yet to come. Indeed, the diminution of the national idea is a stark demonstration that the truths about the human condition that made the national idea work a few centuries ago have become insufficient to ground social and cultural institutions, *because of the persistence of institutions as sites of class interest*. Other truths not anticipated in the original movement to institutionalization have emerged, and these have expanded the reality of the human condition as a result. That is indeed just what cultural studies originally tried to address: the failure of institutional transformation to reduce the influence of class interest in the communication practices that a generation of Labor Socialists had hoped would have as their end a generation less class-divided than in the past. The semiotic exchange between generations failed, because, as Williams (1965, p. 101) noted, there are always at least three generations present in any social grouping. The middle generation may have held the new generation's conduct close to its collective heart, but it failed to reconcile this with not only the generation that came be-

fore, but with the institutional interests that had grown as that earlier generation grew into its forms of conduct and became familiar and competent with acting within these forms of conduct.

Such a situation is susceptible to analysis in terms of political economy; because of the relations of power associated with institutions generally. There is indeed a vocal branch of cultural studies that keeps this form of inquiry alive (see Sparks, 2000; Mosco, 1996). But it is still at the end of the day a question of how the incumbent generations in the social institutions, governmental, economic, academic, and symbolic, succeed in making these serve as *media* for communicating across generations. At this level, there is a synergy between cultural studies inquiry and communications inquiry that goes beyond simply analyzing messages, or establishing lines of dissemination to audiences. What sort of inquiry will this entail? We close with some possible forms of cultural studies inquiry that will use its existing strengths in combination with the logic of communication to restore the progressive impulse of its early forms.

Cultural Studies Inquiry in Post-National Africa

Crucial to the unfolding of cultural studies (plural) in Africa will be the philosophical difficulty inherent in, and the rhetorical force required for, remaking traditional concepts and understanding African societies as being as dynamic as are those in highly industrialized societies. Our conclusion will glance at one such project, the much-publicized "African Renaissance." First introduced as a rhetorical term by Nelson Mandela in 1994, this idea has become a contested and controversial discursive site. Aside from the many ways that one can reconstitute the retrospective conception of "Re-

naissance" in its application to European history, the variegated participants in the discourse have all brought their own more or less idiosyncratic conceptions of "Africa" to the table. It goes almost without saying that every one of them has some gloss on just what it is about "African Culture" that must be the founding principle for any prospective renaissance (see contributions to Makgoba, 1999). This kind of debate tends toward the nominalistic, whereas the pragmatism of Masolo, Wiredu and Peirce is based on a form of realism. Where realism approaches its subject matters in a "world consisting of Universals into which Singulars are introduced (come into being and pass away)," nominalism of the scholastic persuasion considers a "world of Singulars into which Generals are introduced" (Charles Rudder, posting to Peirce discussion forum, June 1, 2001).

Many practitioners in the global cultural studies endeavor tend to consider cultures as singulars into the multiplex and chaotic presence of which it is their end to introduce whatever General Terms they can agree upon to reduce the manifold of singulars to some kind of unity. This is in part the inheritance of post-Deweyan pragmatists like Richard Rorty (1980) and David Goldberg (1993), but also of both the Nietzschean tradition that Thornton identifies, and the philosophies of science that follow from the work of Paul Feyerabend (1975) and Thomas Kuhn (1970). What we will propose, instead, is that conceptually the subject-matter of cultural studies is a real general operative in the (human) universe into which instances of cultural phenomena are introduced. We have already suggested that this really-operative general concept is that which governs particular instances of communication between generations, and the general conduct of cultural institutions and conduct that determine the development of new generations' endowments into talents.

In closing we will outline ways in which we think we might fulfil our responsibility for supporting this assertion in the communicative forum that we believe should constitute the scientific community of cultural studies inquiry. We will use the particular instance of the African Renaissance as our exemplar.

In this case the singular terms are "in Africa" and "a Renaissance," and these are largely determined symbols with a number of already fixed interpretations arising from different singular contexts. The general term that defines our subject-matter has cognate predications like "is African," "is cultural," or "is progressive." Decisively, there is also the particular *context* formed by the relationships between African conditions and those of others in the global environment. This forms the ethical normative framework within which cultural studies can conceive of the conduct that will have the outcome of removing the doubts that are expressed about the relationship between Africa and the rest of the globe, *however this may turn out to be*. One way to begin exploring this in terms of asserting some hypothesis which will be testable in practice, is to begin from some situation where people are already asserting things about these relations, or about their doubts, or both, in a context of communicative conduct. We will introduce the particular instance of a session on "Resisting and contesting media globalization in the African context," part of the Sankofa African Renaissance Conference in Durban, South Africa, March-April 2001.

Although the original participants listed for the session panel comprised six persons from the media, the academy and civil society, the actual event only saw three panelists: Peter Davis, editor of the Durban *Sunday Tribune* newspaper; Xolela Mangcu of the Steve Biko Foundation and the University of the Witwatersrand, and Arnold Shepperson of

the University of Natal. However, this turned out to be a case of less-is-more, in that participants had more time to speak to their papers and greater room for discussion thereafter. Almost the first thing the presenters realized was that the session theme was way too broad, in that three people proposing means of contesting and resisting globalization was likely to have little more effect than spitting into the wind. After deciding that 'responding to media globalization' was somewhat less pretentious, and having decided on the order of presentation, the participants spoke to their respective papers.

Peter Davis based his presentation on the journalism of the Sophiatown journalists of the 1940s and 1950s, with an emphasis on how the potential for people to transcend their legislated and institutional racial separation during this period exemplified the Zulu conception of *ubuntu* (see above).

Arnold Shepperson stressed the need for promoters of projects like the African Renaissance to avoid essentialist conceptions of culture, shifting their grasp of the general conceptual status of the term from that of being a problem, to that of being a potential solution. The means for accomplishing this was, as we have conceptualized it above, to treat cultural issues on the basis of the general realities of developing new generations' endowments into talents suited to a world conceivably different from the one of the present.

Finally, *Xolela Mangcu* presented a summary of development solutions in which alternative forms of institutionalization made it possible for a population to enjoy real improvements in their quality of life with minimal national state-style development by command. Using the example the Indian state of South Kerala, he proposed similar options for some of the more marginalized areas of Africa.

Individually, these presentations would have amounted to little more than rehashes of themes that reflected the present-

ers' research or professional concerns. In that particular forum, however, and given the order of presentation, the discussion saw the ideas developed in the presentations combine into a series of proposals that made the approach to media globalization look rather less daunting than the original session theme had made them appear. At the end of the presentations it was clear that there was a way of viewing *ubuntu* as a *quality of human relations applicable in many contexts* (in the forms of solidarity, nationalism, ideological partisanship, and so on). The concept of culture, based in developing endowments into talents, has an end in action that seeks to realize in people's conduct whatever qualities an idea like *ubuntu* might assert to be admirable in human relationships. Finally the practices of institutions that deploy such talents in the perpetuation of both the qualities they embody and the ends after which they strive, are a logical or determinate outcome that has some more or less determinate influence on the ways a community or group or class or nation will conduct itself. In short, *ubuntu* is an aesthetic conception of what constitutes the admirable in human relations; culture is the ethical framework within which communities embody these qualities in the talents that provide the base of their actions; and *institutions* are the means of communicating these prior norms to future generations. Institutions without ethics are just paper-shuffling exercises; ethics without an aesthetic rhetorical basis is merely sophistry; the point is that any institution is presupposed by a culture, any culture is presupposed by an aesthetic of human relations. As Peirce came to see the general relationship: there is a presuppositional order of normative sciences such that logic is presupposed by both ethics and aesthetics; but ethics is presupposed only by aesthetics. There is no normative science that is presupposed by aesthetics, the latter being grounded in the ways that a community

describes the phenomenon of the human condition (Peirce, 1998, pp. 196-207).

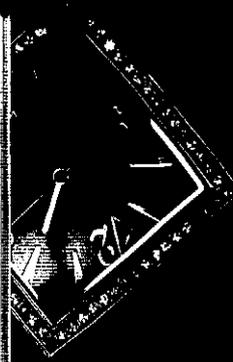
In the conclusions presented to the closing plenary of the conference, the session participants effectively recommended the foregoing as the conceptual strategy on the grounds of which policy for media literacy and literacy education, as institutional action, could in future be developed. This was, needless to say, but one set of recommendations among a plethora of others, some of which hardly went beyond sloganeering, while others obviously reflected considerably more thought in their composition. The main thing, from the point of view of our article, is that the conceptualization of the much-abused term *ubuntu* was in this instance given an unambiguous conceptual grounding. What had been, as noted briefly above, one of those portmanteau words that served the rhetoric of whatever ideology had mobilized it, now took on the clear role of an *African aesthetic* in the complex of global relationships. Further, the concept of culture also took on an unambiguous ground in the general class of practices, action and conduct that one associates with the development of endowments into talents. Finally, the recommendations made it clear that media are institutions, and not messages. These institutions can range from local or community newspapers or radio stations, to multinational titles in print or electronic form; but they remain institutions the purpose of which is to organize semiotic exchange such that the relevant communication may occur.

Conclusion: Cultural Studies and the Ethics of Communication

The more general applicability of this anecdotal description of how cultural studies works comes from engaging the

kinds of concerns that Raymond Williams raised (1989). Peculiarly, by beginning with Masolo's and Wiredu's broader pragmatic approach based in Dewey, and extending this with Peirce's systematic and logical treatment (William James credits Peirce with coining the term "pragmatism" in the 1870s), cultural studies becomes far less of a "vague and baggy monster." Precisely as Williams suggested, the more precise basis of the concept of culture possible within pragmatism indeed permits cultural studies to be conceived as Williams thought it could be, "as media studies, community sociology, popular fiction or popular music" and so on. Yet the pragmatic conception of culture as the concern with development of endowments into talents gives focus to each of these topical branches without the tendency for one to become identified with or collapsed into all the others.

Because the idea of inquiry in these fields is also a specifically communicational practice, a semiotic addressed to an indefinite "to whom it may concern" (see Ransdell, 1998; Peirce, 1998, 390-391) in a future beyond anybody's control, findings in specific topical fields can become meaningful through this communication. Cultural studies has, to some extent, drawn upon the communications studies tradition institutionally (Hardt, 1993; but see also Maras, 1998). But Williams' point was not that cultural studies was "vague and baggy" as a field of study; instead, he was more concerned about the difference between a teacher of a subject and an inquirer into a problem, for which the relevant intellectual discipline for its explication is not yet established. In less clumsy terms: Williams was concerned that what passed for cultural studies as a course for undergraduates had not as yet clearly defined what research program provided its teaching material. It must be remembered that the original BCCCS was a graduate studies and research unit, with the explosion



of undergraduate cultural studies courses arriving on the scene only *after* those first research students had taken their skills elsewhere. It is also worth remembering further that the skills those original students brought to BCCCS had been learned not in "inter-disciplinary" undergraduate programs, but in specific disciplines like History, Sociology, Anthropology, Literature, and so on. It was not the disciplines that drove their research, but the *subject-matter*. Thus Williams' concern was that the field had become carried away with the communication between practitioners of the study's multiple self-descriptions, at the expense of dealing with an identifiable subject-matter that would add value to the humanities as they go forward.

To recall Peirce: science is essentially the practice of communicating what one learns from experience to those who in an indefinite context of reception will be able to understand these findings under different kinds of experience. The study of communication as a practice, therefore, is crucial not just to African cultural studies: it is the very essence of *any* cultural studies. In the globalizing environment of multinational capital with its niche-marketed commodities, neo-monopolistic investment strategies, and mobile capitalization policies, it is even more important that cultural studies look beyond the immediate identities of those marginalized by these developments. The field must, as a form of communication, look to whom its messages will reach when the consequences of all these developments become more evident. Already, African scholars like Masolo and Wiredu have tapped into the pragmatic tradition from the point of view of how modernity has impacted on specific forms of African life. Cultural studies must draw on this not to withdraw the African experience from that of the global cultural environment, but to communicate with that audience so that the people of Africa can

take their rightful place in the world after the aberrations of imperialism, neo-colonialism and globalization.

To conclude, there is a clear need for cultural studies to clarify what it is that it is communicating about to its audience in future generations. This entails three imperatives:

- 1) clarifying its subject-matter, that which guides its inquiry;
- 2) interpellating the community of inquiry to whom inquirers will address their findings; and
- 3) developing and reviewing the criteria whereby the cultural dimension of reality is conceived as a subject-matter.

First, we have already proposed that the subject-matter of cultural studies is based in the practical business of developing endowments into talents. This is not really a new thing, but simply a reminder that the very *word*, culture, has as its principal etymological root the sense of looking-after, nurturance and living-in-a-place that is essential to every human being's coming to have an identity in the first place. But the historical trend towards institutionalizing this business means that the objects of this subject-matter cannot exclude precisely these institutions. This, we have noted, is a study proper to the methods and categories of political economy, but shifted towards the consequences of institutional action§ on the future conduct of new generations in general, and not purely on class-based or ethnically-defined units. Second, we have suggested that the community of inquiry be conceived globally and not continentally or in terms of individual cultural entities. This is necessary because global conditions require global approaches, even to the extent of conceiving one's local conditions as part of a global context. The community

of inquiry with which the contemporary cultural studies practitioner must seek to communicate has to include as much of the conceivable community of inquirers who may need to address some cultural aspect of their subject-matter. This leads to the third dimension of the communicational aspect of cultural studies: it can be all too easy to identify *every* form of institutional conduct with the development of endowments into talents. Thus the criteria for marking-off what is "cultural" and what is not must not be so "loose and baggy" as to leave cultural studies without definite topical communications content. At the same time, the criteria should nevertheless be flexible enough so that practitioners do not get taken by surprise every time new developments in technology, media, or ideology invite new generations to adopt forms of conduct that privilege new kinds of talents.

This means, in effect, that cultural studies must recover its early research imperative. There must be a greater emphasis not just on graduate study, but on the meshing of practitioners from the various human and social sciences so their specific skills can be brought to bear on the basic subject-matter: the institutional conduct of developing endowments into talents. This should not be designed as an exercise in reinforcing cultural studies as a sort of "megadiscipline" (Maras, 1998), but to expand the capacity of historically established disciplines to communicate more effectively with *their* communities of inquiry. *African* cultural studies can begin by taking a critical look at just how some of the "enchanted darkness" discourse (Hickey & Wylie, 1993) has perhaps identified communities' *responses* to their marginalization by imperialism and neo-colonialism, with conduct that somehow represents an essentialist difference between these communities and similar communities elsewhere.

For example, when cultural studies inquires into distinc-

tions between oral and written cultures, a crucial part of these investigations into Africa require a related reconceptualization of the role of orality in the written philosophical and literary traditions of the West. This reconceptualization is necessary to confront the collapse of 'orality' as a concept into the Romantic city-country trap of the historically industrialized world. We need to remember that the greatest reactionary populists like Hitler, Idi Amin, Pol Pot and others exploited the 'authenticity' of the spoken word to destroy any possibility for democracy in their worlds. Authenticity is legitimated by museums, the printed word, and tourism, amongst other circulatory symbolic mechanisms. The Western remaking of oral and on-site culture into writing, museum exhibits and nationalized forms, and of the preservation (or lack of it) of oral traditions in modern frameworks, is a recurring gripe amongst Africans.

What cultural studies has to remember is that the radical origins of the field in Birmingham during the 1950s was an attempt to recover democracy. The choice of socialism as the vehicle for this has not proven to be as fruitful as seemed apparent at the time. Studies of and in Africa have provided a timely reminder that 'socialism' does not necessarily constitute a globally relevant ground for democracy. There are dynamic and indeterminate cultural pathways to the political value of freedom, and cultural studies have not yet absorbed the fundamental stasis associated with any form of ideology. But getting to grips with what it is the "culture" to which cultural studies refers when it communicates with itself and other fields of inquiry, is a step that can get both cultural studies as subject-matter, and as a body of communicating inquirers, onto relevant tracks for the futures that globalization has made possible.

In an important respect this brings us back to Masilela's

call with which we opened this article. The “nativization” of cultural studies must take into account not only the factors of “being-native” in Africa, but also those factors that make all Africans “native” in a global context. Whatever the present active generations are communicating to their successors, cultural studies in Africa must consider the trajectories possible as a consequence of how this communication is institutionalized. Will the ideas, values and ends communicated under the present conditions not “nativize” succeeding generations into the very sub-alternity and marginality that globalization exploits so effectively in perpetuating transnational capital and its multilateral enforcement institutions? What can cultural studies learn from these institutions’ practices and conditions to enhance the democratic challenge to globalization? How can institutions that are representative find “added value” from cultural studies practitioners’ inquiry into these topics in Africa? How, in short, do such findings communicate in a way that empowers people to take leadership of global trends in ways that represent their needs, instead of conserving the interest of the privileged few? *That* is the communicational task that understanding the subject-matter of cultural studies can enhance.

Arnold Shepperson is a Researcher at the Centre for Cultural and Media Studies, University of Natal, Durban, South Africa.

Keyan G. Tomaselli is Director and Professor at the Centre for Cultural and Media Studies, University of Natal, Durban, South Africa.

Endnote

¹We have based our classification of philosophical approaches in Africa loosely

on that of Henry Odera Oruka (Masolo, 1994, pp. 233-234). Odera Oruka basically classifies philosophy in Africa as 1) ethnophilosophy, based on Tempels, Kagame, Griaule, amongst others; 2) professional philosophy, including those who teach and write in the academy, including Odera Oruka himself, on the basis of formal training in the field; 3) the modern political and ideological philosophers like Leopold Senghor, Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere, amongst others; and finally, 4) Odera Oruka identifies what he calls African philosophical sagacity, "the theory of which is based on the epistemological value of wisdom or sagacity" (Masolo, 1994, p. 234).

References

- Appiah, K.A. (1986). *For truth in semantics*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Feyerabend, P.K. (1975). *Against method: Outline of an anarchistic theory of knowledge*. London: NLB.
- Geertz, C. (1973). *The interpretation of cultures: Selected essays*. New York: Basic Books.
- Gilroy, P. (1993). *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and double consciousness*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Goldberg, D.T. (1993). *Racist Culture: Philosophy and the politics of meaning*. Cambridge, Mass: Blackwell's.
- Hall, S. (1981). Cultural studies: Two paradigms. In T. Bennett, G. Martin, C. Mercer, and J. Woollacott (eds.). (1981), *Culture, ideology and social process* (pp. 19-37). London: Batsford.
- Hardt, H. (1993). *Critical communication studies: History and theory in America*. London: Routledge.
- Harris, M. (1979). *Cultural materialism: The struggle for a science of culture*. New York: Random House; (1980) New York: Vintage Books.
- Hebga, M. (1982). Eloge de l'ethnophilosophie. *Presence Africaine*, 123, 20-41.
- Heller, A. (1987). *Beyond Justice*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Hickey, D. & Wylie, K.C. (1993). *An enchanting darkness: The American vision of Africa in the twentieth century*. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press.
- Higgins, J. (1999). *Raymond Williams: Literature, Marxism and cultural materialism*. London: Routledge.
- Hoggart, R. (1957). *The uses of literacy*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Hountondji, P. (1983). *African philosophy: Myth and reality*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Jahn, J. (1961). *Muntu: An outline of the new African culture*. New York: Grove Press.
- Jones, P. (1994, October). The myth of 'Raymond Hoggart': On 'founding fathers' and cultural policy; *Cultural Studies*, 8;3: 394-416.
- Kagame, A. (1956). *La philosophie bantu-rwandaise de l'etre*. Bruxelles.
- Kroeber, A., & Parsons, T. (1958). The concept of culture and social systems.

- American Sociological Review*, 23: 582-583.
- Kuhn, T.S. (1970). *The structure of scientific revolutions* (2nd Edition). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Makgoba, M.W. (Ed.) (1999). *African renaissance*. Sandton: Mafube. Cape Town: Tafelberg.
- Makgoba, W. (1997). *Mokoko: The Makgoba affair: A reflection on transformation*. Johannesburg: Vivlio Press.
- Maras, S. (1998). Philosophy in the age of megadisciplines. *Continuum* 12;2: 197-216.
- Masilela, N. (1988). Preface: Establishing an intellectual bridgehead?. In Tomaselli, K.G. (ed.) *Rethinking culture*. Bellville: Anthropos Publishers. (Distributed in the U.S.A. by Lake View Press, Chicago and Intervention Press, Denmark, in the European Union.)
- Masilela, N. (1987). The White South African writer in our national situation. *Matatu*, 3/4: 48-75.
- Masolo D.A. (1994). *African philosophy in search of identity*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Mbiti, J.S. (1969). *African religions and philosophy*. London: Heinemann Educational Books.
- Mosco, V. (1996). *The political economy of communication: Rethinking and renewal*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Mudimbe, V.Y. (1989). *The invention of Africa: Gnosis, philosophy and the order of knowledge*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Muller, J. & Tomaselli, K.G. (1990). Becoming appropriately modern: A genealogy of cultural studies in South Africa. In Mouton, J. & Joubert, D. (eds.). *Knowledge and method in the human sciences* (pp. 301-322). Pretoria: Human Sciences Research Council.
- Ngidi, L. (1997). *Ubuntu: The African dream in management*. Cape Town: Knowledge Resources.
- Nuttall, S. & Michael, C.A. (Eds.) (2000). *Senses of culture: South African culture studies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Odera, O.H. (1991). *Sage philosophy: Indigenous thinkers and modern debate on African philosophy*. Leiden: Brill Publishers; Nairobi: Acts Press.
- Peirce, C.S. (1998). *The essential Peirce Volume 2: 1893-1913*. Edited by the Peirce Edition Project. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
- Peirce, C.S. (1992). *The Essential Peirce Volume 1: 1867-1893*. Edited by N. Houser and C. Kloesel. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
- Peirce, C.S. (1965). *The collected papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*. Vols. I-VI. Edited by Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.
- Peirce, C.S. (1966). *The collected papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*. Vols. VII-

- VIII. Edited by Arthur W. Burks. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.
- Pieterse, J.N. (1992). *White on Black: Images of Africa and Blacks in western popular culture*. London: Yale University Press.
- Ransdell, J.M. (1998). Sciences as communicational communities. Arisbe: The Peirce Gateway. <http://www.door.net/arisbe/menu/library/aboutcsp/ransdell/physics.htm>
- Rorty, R. (1980). *Philosophy and the mirror of nature*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Shepperson, A. (1997). Eyes left! Some comments on Christo van Staden's claiming the African mind. *Communicatio*, 23;1: 79-85.
- Shutte, A. (1993). *Philosophy for Africa*. Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press.
- Sparks, C. (2000). Media theory after the fall of European communism: Why the old models from east and west won't do any more. In J. Curran & Mynung-Jin Park (Eds) *De-Westernizing Media Studies*. London: Routledge.
- Steyn, M.E. & Motshabi, K. (1996). *Cultural synergy in South Africa: Weaving strands of Africa and Europe*. Cape Town: Knowledge Resources.
- Tempels, P. (1952). *Bantu philosophy*. Paris: Presence Africaine.
- Thornton, R. (2000). Finding culture. In Sarah Nuttall & Cheryl-Ann Michael (Eds.), *Senses of Culture: South African Culture Studies* (pp. 29-48). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Tomaselli, K.G. (1998). African cultural studies: Excavating for the future. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 1;1: 143-153.
- Tomaselli, K.G. (1992). The role of the media in promoting intercultural communication in South Africa. *Communicatio*, 18;1: 60-68.
- Tomaselli, K.G., & Shepperson, A. (2000). South African cultural studies: A journal's journey from apartheid to the worlds of the post. In N. Denzin (Ed) *Cultural studies: A research volume*. Volume 5 (pp. 33-23). Stanford, Conn.: JAI Press Inc.
- Van Staden, C. (1996). Claiming the African mind: Postcoloniality and cultural studies. *Communicatio*, 22;2: 71-76.
- Williams, R. (1989). *The politics of modernism: Against the new conformists*, Ed. T. Pinkney. London: Fontana.
- Williams, R. (1973). *The country and the city*. London: Chatto and Windus.
- Williams, R. (1965). *The long revolution*. Harmondsworth: Pelican.
- Williams, R. (1958). *Culture and society*. Harmondsworth: Pelican.
- Wiredu, K. (1980). *Philosophy and an African culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wright, H. (1998). Dare we De-Centre Birmingham? Troubling the 'origin' and trajectories of cultural studies. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 1;1: 33-56.