

# Re-Reading Richard Hoggart



# Re-Reading Richard Hoggart: Life, Literature, Language, Education

Edited by

Sue Owen



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To John



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Cover Photo of Richard Hoggart as UNESCO's Assistant Director-General for Social Sciences, Human Sciences and Culture. February 1970. Photo © UNESCO/ Dominique Roger. Reproduced by permission.

## FOREWORD

SIMON HOGGART

“YOUR Dad’s famous, isn’t he?” I was sometimes asked at school. Hard to know how to reply, so I evolved the all-purpose answer, “he’s well known in his field”, which was both true and, I thought, pleasingly modest. Of course he was rather more famous than that, though a long way from what is known now to young people as a “sleb”—a celebrity.

The nearest Dad came to real celebrity was during the *Lady Chatterley* trial in 1960, which filled page after page in the papers. One carried the headline: “Lady C ‘puritanical’ says the potty prof”. For a schoolboy son this was both exhilarating and deeply embarrassing, though we were naturally exceedingly proud when the jury found in favour of the book. In 2006 BBC4 made another film about the trial. Dad was played by David Tennant, who had just started as *Doctor Who*. He had researched the part thoroughly, had a picture of Dad on his mobile phone, had studied newspaper pictures of the time to get the right clothes, and watched old TV interviews for the crucial intonation. It was a fine performance (Doctor Who, Hamlet, Richard Hoggart makes an eclectic collection of roles), but the only thing wrong was his long sideburns. I told him Dad had never ever worn those; he grinned and said that he had to play the Doctor again next day, and the sideburns wouldn’t grow back in time. That’s a very modern form of fame: being depicted on television wearing Doctor Who’s face furniture.

I learned other things at the time. The son of Mervyn Griffiths-Jones QC, the prosecuting counsel, told me that his father always prepared his words to the jury with great care and never deviated from his script. But on that occasion he felt that his opening address was going so well that he could risk an *ad lib*. The line, “would you want your wife or servants to read this book?” popped out. He realised immediately that he had blown the speech, and possibly the whole trial, though Dad’s evidence was also critically important. He had seen some other academics being turned over by Griffiths-Jones, who had easily backed them into qualifications and scholarly caveats, making their evidence seem feeble and evasive. So he was determined not to back down from anything he said. Hence the long

discussion of the word “puritanical”—“yes, and poignant and tender too”, he added. And there was the splendid moment when Mr. Griffiths-Jones expostulated: “Reverence? *Reverence* for a man’s balls?”

We were in America in 1957—Dad had an exchange year at the University of Rochester, New York—when *The Uses of Literacy* (the original title, *The Abuse Of Literacy* would perhaps not have caught on so fast) was published. The gestation had been long and difficult. Dad’s thoughts on the degradation of the language had been illustrated with extracts from real newspapers and books, especially American pulp fiction. Chatto & Windus’s lawyer warned that if these publications decided to sue, it could cost up to a million pounds—a large sum now, quite unimaginable then. So he had to write his own extracts, which delayed publication for many months, though he clearly had a lot of fun doing it. One of his inventions was a novel called *Death Cab For Cutie*; someone in the Bonzo Dog Doo Dah Band must have read the book and wrote a song with the title, which was then adopted as the name of my own son’s favourite American rock group. In such ways do jokes spill down the generations.

We returned to find the book a huge success, with Dad feted, and even asked to go on television. Now there is so much TV that few are spared from appearing on it, but in those days it was a form of glory reserved for a handful of people, even if the programmes in question went out at curious times to what must have been small audiences.

America had been an exciting trip for the whole family. Rochester paid him a fairly pitiful salary, but we managed trips to Washington, New York, Canada and New England, driving a second-hand brown and cream De Soto, one of the last American cars to be shaped like a toad rather than an elongated coffin. We returned to find *The Uses Of Literacy* a great talking point. Tony Warren, who created *Coronation Street*, told Dad that its depiction of working class culture had made him realise you could weave fascinating and involving narratives around it. Since then I have long lost count of the number of people—from strangers I meet in the normal haphazard way, to government ministers and other establishment figures—who have said how much the book inspired them by mirroring their own experiences, or in some sadder cases, reflecting all that they had missed. I suspect that the only people who took against the book were those A-level students for whom it was a set text, though the money helped—as Sir Keith Joseph would have said—to embourgeoisify the family. He has never been remotely rich, but the contrast with the newly married adult education lecturer—living in a flat in Hull, driving up and down the East Yorkshire coast on icy, foggy night—was considerable. We

could afford holidays in France, and a car that actually started on winter mornings.

Two more years in Hull were followed by a move to Leicester, where Dad loved working with the cerebral, gentle and endlessly generous Arthur Humphreys. This was also the time he was working on the Pilkington committee on broadcasting. Its bold assertion of the importance of public service broadcasting was controversial at the time—at least among those who wanted to make themselves rich by giving the public “what it wants”—but did, I think, keep the argument along the right lines and helped considerably to maintain broadcasting standards in Britain. The committee was partly peripatetic, meeting in members’ homes on occasion, so when Billy Wright, former captain of the England football team, came to visit us my brother and I were thrilled. (Though Wright let us and the neighbourhood boys beat him at tackling in the garden, which wasn’t the idea at all.) Joyce Grenfell also came, and she remained a life-long friend. I won’t forget the summer party we three children gave for Mum and Dad. It rained, so everyone had to come in from the garden. Joyce perched on the arm of a sofa and did her act. Everyone was entranced.

Leicester had been satisfactory in very many ways, but around then Birmingham offered the chance to set up the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, and he moved there in 1962. The Centre was hugely absorbing, though staff relationships in the English department were perhaps not quite so good. However, Malcolm Bradbury—briefly—and David Lodge were there and they were frequent visitors to our house.

As was the poet Auden, one memorable summer in 1967. Dad’s first book had been a critical discussion of his work, and Auden had liked it. Dad nominated him for an honorary degree at Birmingham, and the tradition was that if your graduand was picked, you had to put them up. Auden had been partly raised in Birmingham, and was pleased to visit the place again. He swept in and made himself very much at home. Various friends and colleagues from the university were invited to meet the great man. I was in charge of drinks. Auden asked if I knew how to make a dry martini. I said I thought I did. “I’ll show you how I make them”, he growled (his voice seemed a strange mixture of English, American and even a touch of Germanic, since he spent half the year in Austria.) He took a three pint jug from the cupboard, emptied an entire bottle of gin into it, added a whole lemon sliced and a trayful of ice cubes. He then poured in one bottle-cap of dry vermouth and stirred. He placed the jug in front of him on a coffee table and held court. It lasted the length of the party, just.

His conversation was, for someone anxious to learn about the wellsprings of his poetry, perhaps disappointing. He spoke at length about

the merits of Kenwood mixers, and recounted an amusing story about the time he and his partner Chester Kallman had tried LSD in New York, in order to discover what all the fuss was about. A doctor friend had administered the drug but nothing had happened. They had gone out to a diner for a meal. Auden was delighted to see his mailman apparently doing a dance on the sidewalk. This was a proper druggy hallucination, so they had hurried back to their apartment. Next morning the mailman rang the doorbell and asked why they had ignored him. "I had a parcel for you, Mr Auden, and I was jumping up and down to get your attention, but you looked right through me..." Much of the time the poet spent in a deckchair in the garden, chain-smoking Lucky Strikes. There was a touching moment at the end of his stay, a Sunday morning, when I descended to find him tracing the grid of the Observer crossword onto baking paper, so he could solve it without spoiling it for anyone else.

Next was Paris in 1970, working as an assistant director-general at UNESCO, the UN's cultural organisation, and a real culture shock in itself. It offered bureaucracy that made Indian railways clerks seem as free spirited as sailors on shore leave, and gave an alarming introduction to the grand certainties of French life (there was a lovely, cosy restaurant round the corner from their apartment called Le Lloyds. It would never admit them—"desolé, monsieur, nous sommes tout à fait complet"—even when they were plainly empty. Dad's French secretary knew how to solve that problem over the phone: "*M. Richard Hoggart, le sous-directeur MONDIALE de l'UNESCO commande une table!*" They were honoured customers from then on.)

To begin with, it was a lonely time for my mother. Her own mother had just died, my sister and I had left home, and my younger brother was just starting university. The empty nest was not even her own house. The French are not the easiest people to be close to, and Dad's work was demanding and absorbing, if at times horribly frustrating. For us three children, however, it was wonderful—the salary was generous and they announced they would pay fares for as many times as we wished to visit. Many friends and acquaintances came to stay or at least get a proper cup of tea in apartment they rented in a fine *hôtel particulière* on the Boulevard Haussmann. UNESCO took him around the world, accompanied by our mother as often as was possible. These travels included India, Japan, Australia, the US, Africa, Latin America and countless small nations where there might be a temple, a library, a mural or a fortress to be saved.

Back in Britain after five years, they moved to an old converted hop barn in Farnham, Surrey, almost the countryside and only an hour from

London. Dad took a job as warden of Goldsmiths College in New Cross and helped steer it towards full status within the University of London, while encouraging the world-celebrated art department (“though we are *not* responsible for Tracey Emin”, one tutor told me happily.) Recently they re-named the college’s main building after him.

They retired to live full-time in Farnham in 1984. More books followed—the three volume autobiography, the book about Farnham itself, full of unexpected detail and insight, and books about language, mass culture, and the experience of growing old. There were also innumerable articles for learned journals, serious magazines and for newspapers. BBC producers, radio and TV, trekked down from London to do interviews, and seemingly endless requests to speak came week after week in the post. He liked getting honorary degrees himself; among the ones he was proudest of were Bordeaux—he had quite some success in France—and, perhaps belatedly, his own alma mater, Leeds. On several occasions, the last quite recently, he told my younger brother Paul that he felt he had missed his way and had not produced anything of lasting worth. He had, he said, always wanted to be a novelist (he did try once, but I don’t think ever got past the first chapter). We have thousands of novelists, most now forgotten, but only a few writers who have been quite so influential.

They moved to Norwich in 2001 to be near my sister and her family. It has been a time of steady winding down. But there are now eight grandchildren, three already launched in careers, and in 2007, a great-grandson.

It has been, on the whole, a very happy life, though not an easy one. Not difficult because of the poverty he experienced as a child and often wrote about—money hasn’t been a problem for a long time. My mother has been a wonderful helpmeet for him, and both of them were tremendous parents for us. Dad worked astonishingly hard—as hard at home as at work, and we used to think it extraordinary that on Christmas Day, for example, after presents and lunch but before Morecambe and Wise, he would quietly nip off for his writing board, a battered thing which had probably seen war service, and make notes for a lecture, or a new chapter. He would cheerfully work away while the rest of the family played a board game under his nose. For the rest of the year, the door of his study was always open, and if you wanted to pop in for some advice, help, money, or just a chat, he’d drop what he was doing and pay full attention. And of course like most dads he ran an unpaid taxi service for his offspring.

His public image was always somewhat austere, and he could be ferocious in argument, as many people know—though I’ve noticed how the people with the most intellectual bruises to show are often the most

admiring and affectionate. But at home he loved comedy on television, the company of old friends, wine with dinner—in France we would invent magnificently complicated cocktails before going to Le Lloyds for seafood and guineafowl. I, and my brother and sister, feel the same—it’s wonderful to have a Dad who you love so much and of whom you are also so proud. In his last book, *Promises To Keep*, which is about growing old, he wrote in the introduction: “Gradually, but more and more I also began to look back, and through that inverted telescope tried to reconsider the main elements of our lives ... the public events and ideas which have interested me, and their intertwining with personal life. Such as the family; above all the family.”

# INTRODUCTION

SUE OWEN

Richard Hoggart has been one of the leading cultural commentators of the last sixty years. He was the first literary critic to take the working class seriously and to extend the parameters of literary criticism to include popular culture. Hoggart put the working class on the cultural map. He differentiated between what was offered by the “popular providers” (media, popular fiction, advertisements) and the resilient culture of working-class people themselves. Hoggart’s most famous work is the seminal *The Uses of Literacy*. Part II (written first) offers a searing indictment of the specious populism and banality of popular newspapers and magazines, the fake “pally patter” of the tabloids and of adverts aimed at ordinary people, and the literary flatness and moral emptiness of much popular fiction. Part I celebrates the resilient culture of working-class people themselves and offers a basis for the argument that working-class people deserve better than what passes for popular culture.

This creates the basis for a challenging the elitism of his predecessors, such as Matthew Arnold, T. S. Eliot and F.R. and Q. D. Leavis. Hoggart questions these critics’ view of “the masses” as passive recipients of a debased “mass culture”. Discussing in an interview Queenie Leavis’s *Fiction and the Reading Public*, he observes:

It’s a classic text, but throughout it she treated romantic fiction as though she had a peg on her nose. She also made a fairly simple equation between what people read, and what they become. So I wanted to look at popular literature in a more inward way to show that a good bad book may bring out good impulses, or that people may bring to it things which are themselves almost unconsciously critical. (Hoggart, 1990, B6)

Similarly, in his Inaugural Lecture at Birmingham University in 1963, he advises humility about what people actually take from popular art and adds, “Perhaps no one should engage in this work who is not, in a certain sense, himself in love with popular art” (Hoggart, 1973, 242). Even in Part II of *Uses*, where what we would now call “dumbing down” is most strongly deplored, there are signs of a certain relish for aspects of popular

fiction, as I discuss in the chapter on Hoggart and Literature below. Thus, Hoggart distinguishes himself from Leavisite cultural elitism and at the same time initiates the important mid-twentieth-century shift from deploring “popular culture” to seeing it as a source of possible insight and inspiration.

Yet Hoggart also warns that “Assimilated lowbrowism is as bad as uninformed highbrowism” (*ibid*). It is all about getting the balance right. Questions of value, for Hoggart, cannot be evaded:

It is plain that behind almost any discussion today about the arts, and indeed about any of those areas of British culture with which I have been involved, lies the evaded question of value judgments. (1993, 240)

For Hoggart, the idea of value must be defended. Otherwise democracy is open to abuse:

It is true ... that it is better to be free to find our own rules than to have them imposed by church or state. But it is precisely in these kinds of democracies that this openness is comprehensively abused by people with their own ulterior purposes, does not lead to our being left alone, let alone aided to find our own beliefs. We are besieged by a mass of apparently conflicting but actually consonant voices, each peddling its own patterns of overt or more likely hidden beliefs. All of them—politicians, advertisers, tabloid newspaper hacks and many another—are interested parties; the ways of life they offer have overwhelmingly at their centre the notion that it’s all a matter of taste, and of changing taste, since that’s what keeps the wheels of this kind of society turning. Openness becomes emotional promiscuity, choice becomes whim; but underneath is a passivity, the acceptance of things as they are and are offered. (1993, 240)

A crucial aspect of the argument of *The Uses of Literacy* is that the “popular persuaders” (all “consonant” in method, however different in their particular ideology) exploit and graft themselves on to old, positive values. Thus, traditional working-class openness becomes shared passivity: “Above all, you mustn’t resist, like a stone in the water, snagging the inchoate flow. Or make distinctions” (1993, 242). And he is not afraid to challenge those who abandon critical value judgments in favour of populism and so critically disempower those from disregarded sub-groups whom they ostensibly defend. Hoggart challenges the view that “anything goes”, that one shouldn’t be a snob or a spoilsport, that high-mindedness or intellectual snobbery must be avoided at all costs and can’t be distinguished from intellectual discrimination and critical stringency. For Hoggart it is crucial to tackle this error in order to arm

people against the manipulations of the popular persuaders and to challenge the tyranny of relativism which they exploit.

Hoggart is best known for *The Uses of Literacy*, but has been a prolific writer, publishing twenty-seven books, including two in 2004 at the age of eighty-seven. These range from works of cultural analysis such as *The Way We Live Now*, to works of personal reflection such as *First and Last Things* and *Promises to Keep*, and to collections of essays on a wide variety of topics, such as the two volumes of *Speaking to Each Other*, *Between Two Worlds* and *An English Temper*. One of his most important contributions to the transformation of perceptions of class and culture was the founding of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at Birmingham University in the early 1960s. He explains the thinking behind the move in his Inaugural Lecture.<sup>1</sup> The new field of cultural studies was conceived as within English Literature. Hoggart had been prompted to study popular culture partly by the questions asked by his students in adult education about connections between literature and daily life. He had made such connections in *The Uses of Literacy* and in his inaugural lecture at Birmingham he challenges others to follow his lead as he makes the case for widening the boundaries of English. English, Hoggart argues, “has to do with language exploring human experience, in all its flux and complexity. It is therefore always and finally in an active relation with its age; and some students of literature—many more students of literature than at present—ought to try to understand these relationships better” (1973, 243). Schools of English, Hoggart argues, have a mission to engage with how language is being used in the world today, even if this means moving outside disciplinary boundaries. Hoggart is not debunking literary criticism but giving it a broader mission. A training in English encourages “increased respect for the life of language, and for the unpremeditated textures of experience” (1973, 234). Thus, the literary critic is uniquely fitted to expose debased uses of language by the persuaders and manipulators, when “prose has its eye only slightly on the object and almost wholly on the audience” (1973, 235). This is effectively a political stand:

As it is, too many of us stay most of the time within our well-defined academic areas – but succumb easily to occasional invitations from the world outside. We do not with sufficient confidence separate ourselves from that world nor sufficiently critically engage with it. By insisting on the difficult but responsible life of language, and on the overriding importance of the human scale, we can try to do our part in resisting the unreal, unfelt and depersonalized society. (1973, 237)

This still seems pertinent.

The remit of the new cultural studies, as Hoggart envisages it, is threefold: “one is, roughly, historical and philosophical; another is, again roughly, sociological; the third—which will be the most important—is the literary critical” (1973, 239). The “historical and philosophical” approach includes the need to know more about the history of “the cultural debate” along the lines pioneered by Raymond Williams in *Culture and Society*, and a better definition of terms to avoid confused assumptions as “The clash of undernourished generalizations and of submerged apologetics takes the place of what should be a dialogue” (1973, 240). Some might call this work “theoretical”. It has gone on in the last forty years without Hoggart’s appeal for it being recognized. And his appeal remains topical: whilst terms like “highbrows, middlebrows and lowbrows” might now be discredited, other dubious terms Hoggart questions, such as “the common man” and “the masses”, may still have a certain regrettable currency. And Hoggart’s appeal for more philosophers to come into the field has been entirely unheeded, so that there is still a cavalier creation of “new little cultural patterns” such as “the Angry Young Man” movement (1973, 240).

The sociological approach Hoggart envisaged would include attention to the background and rewards of writers and artists; the audiences for “different levels of approach”; the opinion formers and their channels of influence; organizations for the production and distribution of the written and spoken word (including the impact of the “paperback revolution” and what it means to see books as commodities); links between commercialization and (literary) reputations; and finally:

...how little we know about *all sorts of interrelations*: about interrelations between writers and their audiences, and about their shared assumptions; about interrelations between writers and organs of opinion, between writers, politics, power, class and cash; about interrelations between the sophisticated and the popular arts, interrelations which are both functional and imaginative; and how few foreign comparisons we have made. (1963, 241)

Hoggart insists throughout on accuracy and historical specificity and on the avoidance of schematism and specious generalizations. At the same time, he draws a much bigger map here than he is often given credit for. He appears to envisage cultural studies as a multi-disciplinary project to build up an overall view of contemporary culture through attention to specifics. This method of a dialectic between the particular and the general has not really been grasped by his successors in cultural studies. And,

though some of the issues he outlines have been addressed, others remain comparatively unexplored.

Hoggart reiterates that the literary critical approach is the “most important of all” and explains why it is distinct from the sociological approach:

Most important of all: the directly literary critical approach in cultural studies is itself neglected. Yet it is essential to the whole field because, unless you know how these things work as art, even though sometimes as “bad art”, what you say about them will not cut deep. Here, we particularly need better links with sociologists. It is difficult, outside a seminar, to use a literary critical vocabulary—to talk about “the quality of the imagination” shown; or to discuss the effect on a piece of writing of various pressures—for instance, to talk about corner-cutting techniques, or linguistic tricks, or even (perhaps especially—about what tone reveals. All this needs to be analyzed more, to be illustrated and enforced—and at all levels, not just in relation to mass arts.<sup>2</sup>

It will be clear that there is a literary critical slant to all this from which later cultural studies has largely departed. Hoggart values literary critical method for its truth-revealing power, its ability to reveal tones and nuances, identify influence, to elucidate, expose and debunk. But always Hoggart insists on the quiddity of the literary or cultural object of study. The text is never to be read as historical evidence, but always from inside out rather than outside in. My essay in this volume elaborates on these issues. Unsurprisingly, these disciplinary distinctions were not always maintained in the way Hoggart envisaged them, especially after his departure from the Centre, though as Stuart Hall and Lawrence Grossberg have pointed out, his influence was nevertheless very strong (Grossberg 2007 and forthcoming; Hall, 2007 and forthcoming). The importance of Hoggart’s initiative in founding the CCCS would be hard to overstate.

In this volume both the origins and continuing relevance of Hoggart’s contribution to cultural studies are explored. Sue Owen and Ben Clarke discuss the origins within literary criticism of cultural studies as practised at the Birmingham Centre, and explore the significance of this. Fred Inglis locates Hoggart within the history of ideas and argues for his importance amidst the “dreadful babble of management jargon which constitutes the élite conversation of culture” (below, 11). Many critics have traced the origin of Hoggartian cultural studies in the tradition of Matthew Arnold, T. S. Eliot, and especially in the work of F. R. and Q. D. Leavis, tempered by voices such as Tawney’s and Orwell’s which were more sympathetic to working-class culture. Sue Owen discusses below another influence, that of W. H. Auden, a fellow though very different outsider, about whom

Hoggart wrote his first book, *Auden: an Introductory Essay*. Tom Steele traces origins of Hoggart's interest in cultural studies in unexpected places: the influence of his tutor at Leeds University, Bonamy Dobrée, and of Italian intellectuals encountered in wartime. Steele argues that Hoggart has close affiliations to the maligned autodidact tradition, and that public institutions also played an important role in forming his taste and feeling for class: schools, libraries, universities, adult education, the serious press and public service broadcasting. Sean Matthews argues for the influence of D. H. Lawrence on the formation of the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies and on the whole field of Cultural Studies.

Hoggart did not remain at the Birmingham Centre but handed over to Stuart Hall in 1970 to take up a post as Assistant Director-General of UNESCO. Malcolm Hadley discusses this period of his life in the final essay in this volume. Hoggart's description of the move in his *Life and Times* is revealing:

I agreed to go there in what a friend, urging me to accept, called a "walking-the-plank spirit"—that which leads us to take on certain commitments not because we particularly want to, and even though we know that much in them will be boring or unpleasant, but because we have been asked to walk the plank in the service of a valuable idea. (1993, 146)

For Hoggart, public service is a duty of the intellectual. It flows from his conception of the intellectual's social and political role that he has not lived in the ivory tower but has engaged in society, striving for change from within. In addition to his five years as Assistant Director-General of UNESCO, he has undertaken many activities in arts, culture, broadcasting and education. Amongst other positions, he has served as: a member of the Albermarle Committee on Youth Services, a member of the Pilkington Committee on Broadcasting, Reith Lecturer, Chair of the Broadcasting Research Unit, Vice-Chair of the Arts Council, Chair of the Statesman and Nation Publishing Company, Chair of the Advisory Council for Adult and Continuing Education and member of the British Board of Film Classification Appeals Committee. Hoggart was a leading witness for the defence in the trial at the Old Bailey in 1960 of Penguin Books Ltd. for publishing D. H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. His evidence is widely acknowledged to have been central in leading to the acquittal, which marked a watershed in public perception and shifted cultural parameters. As Sean Matthews argues below, this "was an event which drew together several different strands of his life and work, as well as being saturated with wider cultural significance, and its echoes and resonances continue to this day" (below, 86). Hoggart was also the first

British critic to take TV and radio seriously. He made a number of critical interventions: his Reith lectures, his contributions to the report of the Pilkington Committee and his works on media, including *Only Connect: on the Nature and Quality of Mass Communications*, *The Mass Media: A New Colonialism*, and *Mass Media in Mass Society*. Hated by Margaret Thatcher and Mary Whitehouse, Hoggart nevertheless, strove to serve culture in the public sphere, as an important extension of his ideas about the need for cultural quality.

The impulse which has informed all Hoggart's activities in the public sphere is democratic and communitarian. He summarizes his "credo" in the concluding volume of his *Life and Times*:

I began this chapter with an image for the shape of my professional life after the publication of *The Uses of Literacy*; the picture of a single river breaking into many subsidiary streams. Yet the dispersal was in forms of activity, not in types of interest. The delta has had only four or five branches, and they all interconnect.

Their common source is a sense of the importance of the right of each of us to speak about how we see life, the world; and so the right to have access to the means by which that capacity to speak may be gained. The right, also, to try to reach out and speak to others, not to have that impulse inhibited by social barriers, maintained by those in power politically or able to exercise power in other ways.

So the main currents of my interests have been: the right of wider access to higher education, the need for wider access also to the arts as the most scrupulous explorations we can make of our personalities and relationships, and of the nature of our societies; and, as a support to all this, the best uses of mass communications. (1993, 26)

The diversity of Hoggart's cultural interventions has meant that his reputation in the academy has been slow to gain ground. Yet, as Jon Nixon argues in this volume, "The unity of Hoggart's life ... has been achieved, not through these rituals of differentiation and self-positioning, but through a no less difficult process of identifying commonalities and continuities ... Hoggart gained his sense of intellectual identity (and, indeed, moral authority), not only through his insistence that there is still a "we", but through the invocation of this "we" as a means of achieving "the unity of a human life" (below, 30). Fred Inglis similarly argues: "There can be no distance set between this man's life and his work; the published volumes are printed meditations on the stuff of the everyday life which made them possible ... His way of answering the demands of the vast international bureaucracy of which he was Assistant Director-General, of carrying out his duties as Chair or Member of the Pilkington Committee or

the Arts Council—crucial seats in the middle echelons of political power—is the same way as he has of thinking and writing”. Inglis adds: “This identity of theory and practice is indeed his single most compelling contribution to the intellectual methods of the day” (below, 17).

Inglis’s statement about theory and practice raises the issue of Hoggart’s relationship to theory. I argued above that there was a theoretical dimension to Hoggart’s vision for the work of the CCCS, but the fact remains that Hoggart has been seen as untheoretical, and this must be explored. David Lodge below cites Hoggart’s most recent book, *Promises to Keep*: “I have no general theoretical approach of the sort which in other people can produce adherents ... instead, only pragmatic observing and assorted conclusions”. Lodge believes that Hoggart decided to move on because “he instinctively recognized as the sixties gave way to the seventies, that Theory’s historical moment had come” and that “If he had continued in his professorial career [at Birmingham] he would have been swimming against the tide, fighting an unwinnable battle, and perhaps holding back the development of his own research centre” (below, 9). Hoggart himself describes Stuart Hall, his successor at the CCCS, as “particularly at home with theoretical issues, one of my weak spots” (1993, 90). But this modesty about his own relationship to theory masks a deeper concern. A little later in the same volume of his *Life and Times*, Hoggart expresses scepticism about resorting too quickly to theory:

I mistrust the way some people use abstractions as props or crutches, substitutes for thought, ways of showing others and assuring themselves that they belong to an inner group. I suspect anyone who peppers his papers with “heuristic”, “hegemony”, “hierarchy”, “paradigm”, “problematic”, “reification”, “homology” and the like. One can sometimes work through almost unintelligible and certainly rebarbative papers only to realise at the end that, though what they say is sensible and in some ways perceptive, it could have been said almost entirely without that apparatus of in-group theoretical language. (1993, 95).

There is more here than the decent man’s hostility to the use of theory to exclude. Hoggart’s reservations are methodological. He believes in the emergence of ideas about the “bigger picture” from the building up of evidential detail:

If you look long enough at a group of similar things, if you hold back from the first and second and third general comment which comes to mind (whether those comments are small talk or large theory), then occasionally a new unifying idea forms, more useful than what preceded it, able to

become a tool of enquiry. Others may have reached similar ideas by that or different, more structured routes.

My own early ideas of this sort, ideas now much written about theoretically by others and reaches independently by different routes than mine, include, in looking at the ways of working-class people: the manner in which resistance and resilience to new things (cars, videos, television, houses owned not rented) and then their adoption, adaptation, modification and absorption if they prove interesting and useful, if they chime with existing cultural assumptions—how all this works.

Working-class people are then seen as less passive than is often assumed; and not likely to be quickly “made middle-class” by acquiring what are labeled middle-class objects.

Though the acknowledgment that others may reach similar ideas by more structured and theoretical routes is characteristically generous and open-minded, the real thrust of Hoggart’s argument is that reaching too quickly for theory or approaching the working class through a theoretical prism obscures the truth. In particular, theories about bourgeoisification of “the masses” obscure subtle processes of resilience, adaptation and evolving class identity.

There have been two strands of critical judgment of Hoggart’s relationship to theory: the first either criticizes or marginalizes him for being untheoretical, or praises him for decency, in spite of an absence of theory. An example of the negative version of this approach is discussed by Simon Grimble on p. 129 below. A positive version is exemplified Stefan Collini in *English Pasts*.<sup>3</sup> Collini considers Hoggart to be a moralist rather than a theorist:

... moral appraisal of the Hoggartian kind has struggled to get a hearing in political debates increasingly conducted in the idiom of double-entry book-keeping. None the less, this insistence on moral judgement has been the cornerstone of his career, both its foundation and its distinctive note.

... the terms of praise that most readily come to mind to describe his public voice point, for all the distinctiveness of that voice, towards one typically English way of being an intellectual: unpretentious, morally serious, reflective, and (the word is inevitable) decent—unshowily but bottomlessly decent. Above all, he has had the priceless gift, apparently from quite an early age, of knowing who he is ... Hoggart’s natural home is not with that international company of cultural analysts, literary theorists, and assorted academic superstars who are today’s most familiar intellectuals. He belongs, rather, to an older family, one with strong local roots and some pride in ancestry; his forebears include Ruskin and Lawrence on one side, Cobbett and Orwell on the other. Richard Hoggart is an English moralist. More than ever, we need him to be in good voice. (1999, 228, 230)

Collini recently reiterated his early championship of Hoggart in similar terms: “It still seems to me hard not to admire the modest, honest, thoughtful voice of his best prose, just as it is hard, even on relatively little acquaintance, not to like and feel affection for the man himself” (Collini, forthcoming).

The second approach to Hoggart and theory is to find theoretical rigour implicit in his methodology. The first to discern the theoretical weight and methodological importance of *The Uses of Literacy* was French sociologist Jean-Claude Passeron. *The Uses of Literacy* was published in France in 1970 as *La Culture de Pauvre: Etude sur le Style de Vie des Classes Populaires en Angleterre*, with an introduction by Passeron. Passeron is an important figure in the European history of ideas. He collaborated with Pierre Bourdieu in the 1960s in various works exploring the epistemological foundations of popular culture, including *Le Métier de Sociologue*: an assertion of the scientific basis of sociological methodology. Taking his distance from Bourdieu, Passeron moved into exploring the sociology of culture and was drawn to the work of Hoggart. His Introduction to *Uses* is very significant. Patrick Gaboriau and Philippe Gaboriau, in an overview of “Popular Culture Studies in France” cite it as one of the key theoretical texts in the evolution of French studies of popular culture (1991, 178). Passeron’s introduction was translated into English in 1971, at a time when the British intelligentsia was beginning to be excited by the ideas of French intellectuals, and published in the series *Working Papers on Cultural Studies* by the CCCS. An introductory passage states that Passeron “suggests the theoretical foundations and hypotheses in this apparently untheoretical book and goes on to indicate the ways in which it seems to have been misunderstood by bourgeois intellectuals”. The first statement is extremely important, while the second is an understatement: Passeron argues that the book confronts intellectuals with their own biases. Where British critics might see a weakness in the book’s jargon-free style, its grounding in personal experience and empirical method, Passeron sees the autobiographical element as a strength, as it allows Hoggart to “relativise his own judgments” (Passeron, 1971, 121), or in other words to avoid claims to a specious objectivity typical of bourgeois intellectuals. More than this, it allows an honest representation, understanding and reinstatement of the popular voice in culture.

Passeron discerns a theoretical rigour behind the ‘liveliness of the description’ in Hoggart’s book (1971, 122). He explains how the book has social scientific validity in the tradition of ethnography. Hoggart’s lack of distance is a strength not a weakness, allowing him to give a more

complete picture than an ethnographer could, in a “properly sociological effort on the part of the author to hold together systematically a whole play of determinations and a whole constellation of attitudes” (1971, 124). Hoggart’s style allows him to “let the object of study speak for itself” (1971, 124), and thus to redress the bias of studies of the working class by intellectual outsiders. His combination of “distancing and participation” allows him to “perceive and explain by example even the very nuances of the behaviour of intellectuals with working-class backgrounds” and his “particular *habit of mind* is peculiarly effective when bourgeois or petit-bourgeois ethnocentrism needs ousting” (1971, 126). His method reveals the “class biases” of apparently “obvious” views of the working class which are “in their own way as racist as those of pre-scientific ethnographers limited to detailing the barbarism of the ‘primitives’” (1971, 127). For Passeron, Hoggart exposes the “apparently neutral language” and the self-serving “screen of an ideology of experts” behind which bourgeois intellectuals hide.

Such French praise of British empiricism is astonishing. Passeron establishes Hoggart’s social-scientific credentials and traces the debt to *Uses* of a whole swathe of sociological studies throughout the sixties. Of even greater significance is Passeron’s rebuttal of misreadings of Hoggart as non- or even anti-theoretical. Hoggart is able “without any great theoretical fanfares, to pose some questions as pertinent for theory as for the empirical analysis of the transformations in popular culture and the receptivity of the different class levels to the ideological solicitations contained in the message of the cultural industry and directed at them” (1971, 128). This is because Hoggart’s understanding of working-class resilience gives him a more complex perspective on the reception of the mass media and hence a more nuanced appreciation of transformations in popular culture. Far from considering Hoggart untheoretical, Passeron discerns “the originality of this theoretical approach” which allows him to “tease out the law which subordinates the efficacy of the factors of change to their relevance to the pre-existing structures” (1971, 130). Thus, Hoggart is able to demolish retrospective myths of a golden age of working-class culture, as well as making “a protest in the name of scientific objectivity against aristocratic, populist, apocalyptic or foolishly optimistic pronouncements which come between the life of the working class and its necessarily intellectual or bourgeois observers” (1971, 121). Passeron shows an exceptional awareness of Hoggart’s theoretical importance.

The publication of Passeron’s text in English by the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in 1971 should have been

significant, but Passeron's views were not followed up in Britain at the time. It is only recently that some critics have argued for a theoretical dimension to Hoggart's work. In a recent article, Lawrence Grossberg cites Hoggart's statement in "Contemporary Cultural Studies":

... that a society bears values, cannot help bearing values and deciding their relative significance; that it makes what seems like a significant or ordered whole out of experience, a total and apparently meaningful view of life; that it embodies these structures of values in systems of meaning, rituals, forms; that it lives out these values expressively, in its actions and arts; that this living out of values is a dialectical process, never complete, always subject to innovation and change; that no one individual ever makes a perfect 'fit' with the dominant order of values of his culture. (Hoggart, 1969, cited, Grossberg, 2007, 127)

Grossberg notes that this is a theoretical position and adds "I say this because Hoggart (like [Raymond] Williams sometimes) is often described as being either anti-theoretical or at least, atheoretical. But this "dismissal" depends on an argument that slides from a number of correct observations—that Hoggart did not see himself as a theorist; that he disliked certain kinds of (at the time, increasingly influential) theories; and that he despised theory for its own sake, as if theory could answer questions before one even begins the real (empirically grounded) work of analysis—to the fundamentally incorrect conclusion that Hoggart's vision of cultural studies was not theoretically based, and that he thought cultural studies could somehow function without theory" (Grossberg, forthcoming). He adds in a note: "The defense of Hoggart as anti-theoretical is often predicated on, or aligned with the rather patronizing assumption that 'ordinary people' cannot or will not read theory, and hence, that anything addressed to them must be atheoretical". (*ibid*)

Bill Hughes has argued that Hoggart's work parallels the more theoretical analyses of the "Culture Industry" by Adorno and Horkheimer:

As they do, following classical aesthetics, he upholds the reality of artistic value, and approves of the social and ethical utility of art that accompanies it. Though not overtly theoretical in the sense that we have come to understand "theory", Hoggart's writing is not a simple disengaged empiricism either; there is something of the novelist in the way he passionately describes, and indeed invents, cultural phenomena and colours his account with a strong senses of personal involvement and commitment.

Hughes defends Hoggart from the charge of naïve empiricism and couples him with the more overtly theoretical Raymond Williams:

Hoggart's ... personalisation and concretisation escapes that typically Anglophone naive empiricism which spurns the theoretical, though there *is* also something of the bluff, common-sense pragmatist in his tone. Hoggart's "experiential dimension" rescues his thought from Adorno's "baleful enchantments of the concept". The autobiographical elements in *Uses* also connect with Williams's ideas of "lived experience" and the way that Williams, too, self-consciously connected his work with his situation.

Some critics have contrasted Hoggart and Raymond Williams, but Hughes sees that they have much in common. Stuart Hall, similarly, discusses the importance of the *collective* redefinition offered by Hoggart, Raymond Williams and E.P. Thompson of culture as the lived experience, self-expression and capacity for historical intervention of ordinary people. (1980, 57-72). Raymond Williams himself saw Hoggart more as a collaborator than a rival. In the second issue of the *Universities and Left Review* (summer 1957), devoted to a debate on *The Uses of Literacy*, Williams praised Hoggart's deep loyalty to his own people but repudiated his critique of working-class materialism and criticized his exclusion of the politically active minority of the working class. This debate has been read differently by Francis Mulhern and by Stuart Hall. Where Mulhern sees grave criticism of Hoggart's method, Stuart Hall sees a collective effort to expand the definition of culture and politics and a growing perception of culture as one of the constitutive grounds of all social practices (Mulhern, 2000, 62-3; Hall, 2007).

Hoggart is sometimes contrasted with his successor at the CCCS, Stuart Hall, with a crude assumption that Hoggart is empirical where Hall is theoretical. However, this view is not purveyed by Hall himself. Hall regards present-day Cultural Studies as possessing an "astonishing theoretical fluency". This is an implicit criticism of the over-theorization of Cultural Studies, since Hall continues: "The only theory worth having is that which you have to fight off, not that which you speak with profound fluency" (1992, 280). In a recent essay, Hall cites the redefinition of culture as the most important of Hoggart's "methodological and conceptual innovations":

By "culture", Hoggart meant how working-class people spoke and thought, what language and common assumptions about life they shared, in speech and action, what social attitudes informed their daily practice, what moral categories they deployed, even if only aphoristically, to make judgments about their own behaviour and that of others—including, of course, how they brought all this to bear on what they read, saw and sang. This view of culture as the practices of "making sense" was very far removed indeed from "culture" as the ideal court of judgement, whose touchstone was "the

best that has been thought and said”, which animated the tradition from Arnold to Eliot and Leavis. The aim to make culture in the former sense a central and necessary part of the object of study, however fitfully achieved, was as defining a break as [Raymond] Williams’ third definition in *The Long Revolution*—culture as “ways of life”—and, moreover, despite significant differences, a break *moving in a parallel direction*. This was a formative moment for Cultural Studies. (Hall, 2007, 42-3)

Hall pays tribute to Hoggart’s historical significance and reinstates him in his place in the history of ideas:

It is widely recognized that, without Richard Hoggart, there would have been no Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies. It isn’t always so widely acknowledged that. Without *The Uses of Literacy*, there would have been no Cultural Studies. (2007, 39)

For Hall, “*The Uses of Literacy*, in trying to break from this master-discourse of cultural decline, was precisely ‘a text of the break’ ... and for that very reason opened possibilities that Cultural Studies and ‘the cultural turn’ were subsequently to build on”. By “the cultural turn” Hall means the growing centrality of culture, both in terms of the global expansion and sophistication of the cultural industries and as a category of analysis.<sup>4</sup> For Hall, Hoggart’s argument about working-class resilience has a vital *theoretical* importance which makes a “break” with the pessimism of his predecessors and has influenced Hall’s own subsequent work:

... working-class audiences are not empty vessels, on which the middle-classes and the mass media can project, *tabula rasa*, whatever they want. They are not simply the products of “false consciousness” or “cultural dopes” (Hall, 1981).<sup>5</sup> They have a “culture” of their own which, though it may lack the authority afforded by the literary tradition, and is certainly not unified, is in its own way just as dense, complex and richly articulated, morally, as that of the educated classes. It follows that the effects of cultural products cannot be “read off” or inferred from the contents of what is produced for them to consume because, to have “effects” of any depth, they must enter into and be in active negotiation with an already fully elaborated cultural world. (Hall, 2007, 42)

Hoggart’s other key departure from his predecessors in cultural enquiry is to advocate humility about what audiences actually take from unpromising material: to know working-class readers is to understand that they are not as easily influenced as is assumed. Overall, for Hall, Hoggart’s theoretical importance lies in his anti-reductionism which set the tone for the decades of theoretical enquiry which ensued at the CCCS:

There was a profound insight embedded here which runs like a thread through the subsequent twists and turns of Cultural Studies. It posed a critical challenge. It set cultural analysis irrevocably against any tendency to reductionism—whether to pure ideology, “the economy” or “class interests” (while not denying that social interests have a bearing on how ideologies and culture develop or that social location is significant for which ideas are taken up and made effective). Of course, this had consequences for its theoretical work. The relation between the cultural and the social could not be assumed; and, since it did not operate automatically—as what Marx once called “the reflex” of the economy in the sphere of thought—it had to be re-conceptualised, in all its concreteness and historical specificity. Culture did not consist of free-floating ideas; it had to be understood as embedded in social practices. But it was something other than a reflection of some more determinate “base” in some dependent “superstructure”. The question of the Centre’s relation to classical Marxism is written in to this conceptual conundrum, and begins to explain why the Centre went on such a long theoretical “detour” (Hall, forthcoming).

Hall finds in Hoggart the roots of other innovations at the heart of Cultural Studies:

Second, there was the insistence that “ways of life” had to be studied in and for themselves, as a necessary contextualising of any attempt to understand cultural change, and not inferred from textual analysis alone. We may call this the social imperative at the heart of Hoggart’s method: and from such origins the *interdisciplinary* character of Cultural Studies (which has since been somewhat obscured by the Humanities deluge) derived. Third, there was the emphasis on culture as primarily a matter of *meaning*: not meanings as free-floating ideas or as ideals embodied in texts but as part of lived experience, shaping social practice: analysis as “the clarification of the meanings and values implicit and explicit in a particular ways of life” (Williams, [*The Long Revolution*], 1965: 57). Fourth, there was the methodological innovation evidenced in Hoggart’s adaptation of the literary-critical method of “close reading” to the sociological task of interpreting the lived meanings of a culture. One says “sociological”, but clearly something more innovative than standard empirical sociological methods was required—nothing less than a kind of “social hermeneutics” is implied in these interpretive procedures: “we have to try to see beyond the habits to what the habits stand for to see through the statements to what the statements really mean (which may be the opposite of the statements themselves) to detect the differing pressures of emotion behind idiomatic phrases and ritualistic observances” (Hoggart, [*The Uses of Literacy*], 1958: 17). (Hall, 2007, 43)