



CSAA Newsletter editor:
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Articles and Chapters by Postgraduate Students

Gregg, Melissa and Fuller, Glen (2005) "Where is the Law in 'Unlawful Combatant'?: Resisting the Refrain of the Right-eous" *Cultural Studies Review* 11(2): 147-159

Jaworski, Katrina. 2005, '(Un)desirable Acts of Death: Gendered Truths in the Cultural Production of Suicide', in *Corporeal Inscriptions: Representations of the Body in Cultural and Literary Texts and Practices*, eds. Edyta Lorek-Jezinska and Katarzyna Wieckowska, The Nicolaus Copernicus University Press, Torun, Poland: 209-220

Jones, Meredith (2005) "Review of *Cosmetic Surgery, Gender and Culture* by Suzanne Fraser", *Social Semiotics*, 15(2): 256-258

Welcome!

Here is the latest issue of the newsletter of the Cultural Studies Association of Australasia.

This issue includes job descriptions and a nomination form for those of you interested in becoming part of the CSAA's executive committee.

Apart from a range of reports and reviews of conferences and workshops, recent publications and a few announcements, there is a discussion of Cultural Studies and regional areas by Kate Bowles, and a lively response to the debate around Cultural Studies on the CSAA list by Angi Buettner.

A special thanks to Meredith Jones for helping me put this issue together.

As always, if you have any suggestions for further inclusions or topics, please feel free to contact me.

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President's Column

As the end of the year approaches so does the end of my term as President of CSAA. I will not be seeking re-election at this year's AGM. Not because I haven't enjoyed my time as President, I hasten to add, because the fact is it has been a very rewarding 3 years for me. No, the reason I'm not seeking re-election is a simple matter of geography. From January 2006 I will no longer be based in Australia – I am relocating to one of the spiritual homes of cultural studies, namely Cardiff University in Wales.

In this newsletter you will find a nomination form for three executive positions – President, Secretary and Treasurer. All three positions fall vacant this December. If you haven't done so already, do give some thought to taking on one of these roles. Yes there's work involved, but it isn't terribly onerous, and anyway it is a lot of fun!

When I agreed to allow my name to be put forward as nomination for President, a colleague asked why would I want to do that? My answer, then, as now, was that if you believe in something you have to be prepared to get involved, you have to be willing to give of your time and energy. The CSAA got started when I was in the middle of my PhD candidature, then, as now, it struck me as being a needful organisation – academia in Australia is an isolated affair (just try being a postgrad on a scholarship with no access to travel funds in Perth if you don't believe me!); we think internationally, but are compelled to act locally.

CSAA has played a vital role in enabling Australian cultural studies academics to not only think internationally, but act internationally as well. Our conferences attract international visitors and our house journal *Continuum* showcases the high standard of work we do in Australia. Just as importantly, perhaps more importantly, the CSAA makes cultural studies academics visible to one another: I know I'm not alone in owing a great many of my personal friendships and professional relationships to encounters that occurred at CSAA conferences. This newsletter as well as our website has facilitated this process even further by giving scholars the opportunity to develop their profiles in dedicated fora.

Lastly, then, let me thank the executive for the excellent work they've done over the past three years. I think we've accomplished a great deal. The membership base of CSAA has grown considerably and the quality of services we offer members has been greatly enhanced. I look forward to welcoming the new executive at the AGM in Sydney this November.

Ian Buchanan
Charles Darwin University

Recent Publications

Books

- Heryanto, Ariel (2005) *State Terrorism and Political Identity in Indonesia – Fatally Belonging*, Routledge, London and New York (<http://home.pacific.net.au/~arielh/041537152X/index.htm>)
- Oswell, David (forthcoming, 2006) *Cultural Matters: an Introduction to Cultural Studies*, Sage, London
- Plate, Cassi (2005), *Restless Spirits*, Picador, Sydney
- Probyn, Elspeth (2005) *Blush: Faces of Shame*, UNSW Press and University of Minnesota Press, Kensington and Minneapolis
- Rasmussen, Mary Lou (2005) *Becoming Subjects: A Study of Sexualities and Secondary Schooling*, Routledge, New York
- Schlunke, Katrina (2005) *Bluff Rock: Autobiography of a Massacre*, Curtin University Books, Fremantle
- Tabar, Paul, Poynting, Scott, Noble, Greg and Collins, Jock (2004) *Al Lubnanyoun fi Oustralia, Kiraa fil Hawiyah wal Ounsouryah fi zaman Al Awlamah*, Mokhtarat, Beirut. [trans: *The Lebanese in Australia: a reading in identity and racism in the age of globalisation*]
- Turner, Graeme (2005) *Ending the Affair: The Decline of Television Current Affairs in Australia*, UNSW Press, Kensington
- Wise, Amanda (2005) *Exile & Return Among the East Timorese*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia (<http://www.upenn.edu/pennpress/book/14214.html>)
- Also see**
David Bell & Joanne Hollows (eds)(2005) *Ordinary Lifestyles* Open University Press with chapters by several members of CSAA - Frances Bonner, Elspeth Probyn, Felicity Newman and more. (<http://mcgraw-hill.co.uk:2000/html/0335215505.html>)

Post Suburban Sydney: The City in Transformation

A symposium to be hosted by the Centre for Cultural Research,
University of Western Sydney

22-23 November, 2005
Riverside Theatre,
Church St, Parramatta, Sydney

- How are we to understand the spatial order of contemporary Sydney?
- What models describe its emergent forms?

Moving from aerial vistas of spatial pattern to ground-level worlds of lived experience, we want to ask:

- Is suburbia its own 'way of life', and where precisely is it?
- Is there now (or was there ever) such a mode of urban being with a set of defining cultural, political and landscape values?

You are warmly invited to attend this event – sponsored by UWS, Parramatta City Council and Delfin Lend Lease – at which a small number of invited speakers will present papers and engage in discussion on the complex cultural configuration we are calling Post Suburban Sydney.

Registration is \$75/50 per day

For further information, contact Dr Lise Mellor at
l.mellor@uws.edu.au

or Prof. Kay Anderson at
k.anderson@uws.edu.au

or visit the website:
<http://sites.uws.edu.au/uws/conferences/postsub/>

Please feel free to circulate this invitation to all academics, urban professionals, and other stakeholders interested in Sydney's form, figuration, and future.

CSAA Executive Elections 2005

A number of key CSAA positions are up for grabs at this year's conference AGM including President, Treasurer and Secretary. To advance the process, and to encourage you to think about nominating for one of the positions, we include here profiles of the relevant positions.

Nomination forms can be lodged in advance of this year's conference AGM.

The President of the CSAA has the role of chairing the association's executive committee. He/she reports to members on behalf of the executive committee at both the Annual General Meeting and the association's annual conference. He/she is a co-signatory on all the association's financial transactions and has ultimate oversight on expenditure. The president retains the power of veto on all association initiatives. The president is the first port of call for dispute resolution regarding CSAA matters. As the public face of the association, the president represents the association in national fora (such as CHASS) and may speak on behalf of the association in public debates.

The Secretary of the CSAA is mainly responsible for:

- organising, putting together an agenda for and taking minutes at the annual AGM;
- organising, putting together an agenda for and taking minutes for any special meetings (including teleconferences) as required and called by the Executive;
- maintaining an email list of the CSAA Executive;
- less relevant today, but we also have a letterhead pro-forma file which needs to be kept up-to-date in terms of Exec. Members and their contact details;
- putting motions to the Executive, tallying the votes, and calling the decision;
- maintaining the Incorporation of the Association;
- updating the membership list after every conference and sending out reminders to members who did not attend (deleting their profile if they do not renew, extending the length of their membership if they do);
- working with the website editor to provide an accurate list of financial members of the Association as required, especially by Taylor and Francis for *Continuum*, and the newsletter editor. This has (theoretically) been made easier by the introduction of the new CSAA website and members' database, but a database is only as good as the information input into it and members need to take responsibility for maintaining an accurate member profile (especially in the 'address' section where their FULL postal address needs to be entered, even if they have put their institution, department etc. in elsewhere). Most of the ongoing bulk of the Secretary's work is dealing with this and complaints from members who have not received their *Continuums*.

The Treasurer is responsible for the management of the financial receipts and expenditures of the CSAA. Specific responsibilities and tasks are as follows:

- the keeping of financial records in the form of an account book, and files for correspondence and forms;
- the banking of incidental payments;
- the processing of online payments;
- the payment of accounts;
- the lodging of GST to the government.

The role of **Website Editor** is also open to nominations, but as yet there is no job description for this position.

Culture Fix

The 2005 Cultural Studies Association of Australasia Annual Conference – ‘Culture Fix’ – will be held at the University of Technology, Sydney, Friday 25-Sunday 27 November 2005.

Focus

The themes that the conference particularly aims to address are:

preFIX, suffIX: what is happening as ‘culture’, as prefix or suffix multiply its attachments to words such as history, writing, science, Indigeneity, politics, sound, sex, race, class, bodies, ecology, Australia, and education? What are Cultural Histories, Cultural Writing, Cultural Politics, Cultural Pedagogies, Cultural Methodologies, Science Cultures, Film Cultures and Feminist or Indigenous Cultural Studies now?

getting a FIX: staving off a hunger, becoming sensation, feeding a craving by the imbibing of ‘cultural product’ in the shape of music, sex, sport, passion, the wild, theatre, film, television, celebrities, books, drugs, comics, love, visual arts, new media and other forms of popular and high culture; speaks to the ways in which ideas of addiction, euphoria, ecstasy and more ordinary pleasures are particularly conjured up by culture and the cultural.

the FIX: where culture has been proposed as the solution for business as well as social and political problems. But ‘fix the culture’ has also opened up ideas of holistic solutions in other arenas via ideas like sustainability, biosociality, bodywork, natural therapies, spirituality and intersexuality-what does the cultural offer here?

in a FIX: and yet for some, Cultural Studies continues to be understood as ‘in a fix’, a predicament, a dilemma -- is it? Should it be?

Exhibition

An exhibition featuring the work of Australian artists Fiona Hall and Fiona Macdonald titled *Strangely Familiar* will be running in the UTS exhibition space as a part of this conference. This exhibition, with its suggestions and evocations concerning the relationship between comfort and terror, forms another focus of the conference. We look forward to welcoming you to balmy Sydney in late November.

Please note that you have only until November 7th to take advantage of the Early Bird Rate which is particularly important to postgraduates so please act promptly! The registration can be downloaded at the following site:

<http://www.hss.uts.edu.au/csaa/registration/index.html>

ANNOUNCEMENTS

prefix: a postgraduate and early career researcher professional development day

University of Technology, Sydney
Thursday 24 November 2005

Susan Luckman and Fran Martin invite you to participate in **prefix**, a unique professional development event tailored specifically for cultural studies postgraduates and early career researchers, and supported by the ARC Cultural Research Network.

Held the day before CULTURE FIX, the CSAA's annual conference, **prefix** will connect postgraduates and early career researchers with established academics in the field, who will share their experience in relation to a diverse range of topics. Sessions include:

Susan Luckman & Fran Martin on preparing a CV
Stephi Donald on working in teams, changing jobs & managing your mentors
Greg Noble on balancing teaching, admin & research post-PhD
Catharine Lumby on marketing your PhD outside the academy
Chris Gibson & Gerard Goggin on getting published in journals
Terry Flew & Krishna Sen on book publishing
Graeme Turner, Tom O'Regan & Mandy Thomas on ARC grant writing
Stuart Cunningham on making ARC linkages
Mark McLelland on post-doctoral fellowships
plus a guest presentation from **Cary Nelson & Paula Treichler**

The event is free, includes lunch, and is open to all postgraduates and early career researchers working in the field of cultural studies.

For further information or to register for participation, contact the convenors at crn@unisa.edu.au.

To be eligible to take part, please register your interest by 10 November 2005. RSVP as soon as possible as places are limited.



Nomination form CSAA AGM 2005

Position Sought: _____

Name of Nominee: _____

Name of Mover: _____

Name of Seconder: _____

Please note, nominees, movers and seconders must all be paid-up members of the CSAA (this includes during conference time all attendees at the conference, but not prior to registration). If in doubt, please refer to the CSAA online Members' Database @ <http://www.csaa.asn.au>

Signature of Nominee (I consent to being nominated for this position)

Please return completed nomination forms to the CSAA Secretary:

Dr Susan Luckman
School of Communication, Information and New Media
University of South Australia
GPO box 2471
Adelaide SA 5001
Fax: (+61 8) 8302 4745

By fax/mail, no later than November 22, or hand in at the CSAA conference at UTS **PRIOR** to the AGM on Saturday 26 November.

REPORTS AND REVIEWS

Sites of Cosmopolitanism: Citizenship, Aesthetics, Culture

Centre for Public Culture and Ideas
Queensland College of Art, Griffith University
July 6-8, 2005

The Cosmopolitan is nothing if not eclectic, shifting and heterogeneous. It suggests a familiarity with the diverse, openness to otherness and a fluidity that moves beyond the rigid constructs of modernism. At first glance it appears to be specific to the grandiose machinations of world politics and the growth of globalisation, but as these encroach further into the more mundane moments of our everyday lives, the concept of cosmopolitanism has evolved to sit more comfortably between and across disciplines.

It therefore seemed fitting that this conference attracted a multifarious group consisting of theorists and practitioners from such disciplines as creative writing, visual art, media studies, cultural studies, sociology, philosophy, design, history and urban planning. Together their work provided a delightful array of scholarly investigation, including topics as diverse as Reality TV (Dr Henk Hujiser), Australian Indigenous Art (Dr Sally Butler), Cyber Space (Isaac Smith) and the New Romantic Movement (Kathleen Horton).

Throughout the conference, the keynote speakers offered further guidance on applying Cosmopolitanism to their respective fields. Professor Gerard Delanty (University of Liverpool) opened the conference with his engaging lecture on the development of a "Critical Cosmopolitanism." During the following day, Dr Randolph Delehanty (San Francisco) discussed in depth his conceptions of the ideal City/Regional Museum and Professor John Urry (Lancaster University) examined the role of travel/tourism and the global media in constructing a "Culture of Cosmopolitanism".

In his address entitled "Cosmopolitanism and the Australian Imaginary", Professor Graeme Turner (The University of Queensland), discussed the recent Australian shift from the 'suburb' to the 'city' and, following on, Professor Geoffrey Stokes also focused on the Australian context in his thought provoking address on "Cosmopolitan Politics".

To reiterate, this is not a rejection of those methodologies that Cultural Studies has employed to great effect, nor to privilege ethnography as the proper domain of the study of everyday life. I am simply suggesting that we consider the entire range of research practices available, for ourselves and our students, and return some attention to sustained fieldwork to explore those aspects of everyday life not easily registered through other methodologies.

Greg Noble
Acting Director
Centre for Cultural Research
University of Western Sydney

Cultural Studies that overlap with other disciplines and areas that engage much more directly with fieldwork methodologies – like Asian Studies and cultural history and human geography, and of course anthropology – but these often tend to be (as they often rightly complain) on the fringes of Cultural Studies.

There is currently some discussion and activity centred around the idea of Cultural Research which may return us to questions of method. Cultural Research, whatever it is (and, like Cultural Studies, it evades adequate definition), isn't intended to replace Cultural Studies, but it does highlight issues around the purpose and nature of research that focuses on the question of culture, the ways we study it, and the kinds of 'applied' knowledge we produce which has implications beyond the academy. For me, Cultural Research asks us to revisit issues that made Cultural Studies such an attractive path twenty years ago. If I am interested in the dynamics of ordinary existence, Cultural Research asks me to reflect on what I DON'T do well enough: it's a provocation to rethink what we do, how we do it and why we do it. It asks us to consider the ways of best capturing the lived experience of the cultural and social complexity of contemporary globalised world, as well as the broader socio-structural conditions of that experience. It asks us to view that complexity in its spatial and temporal dimensions.

Ethnographic approaches are vital to exploring the long durée of everyday life in its material locations and cultural practices. It suggests a different range of questions, offering a focus that would be less on the representation of identities, for example, than on how people live in places where identities are constantly under negotiation.

Cultural Studies has been good in registering the contradictoriness and ambiguity of the meanings of the contemporary world, but is less equipped to capture these as complexities. Unsurprisingly, I have found myself returning to anthropology, ethnomethodology and geography, community studies and early examples of sociological and Cultural Studies ethnography. These texts are amazingly rich and insightful, even without the theoretical exuberances of more recent times.

There are a number of real issues in advocating a re-emphasis on fieldwork approaches in the name of Cultural Research. I worry that if the idea of Cultural research gets any further purchase in academic discourse, it could simply become a strategy of re-packaging existing practices. I'm reminded of the way some areas of literary studies and communications got rebadged as Cultural Studies in the 1980s, sometimes without significant change in methodology (although the theory changed!).

The more pressing issue is whether we can afford the 'luxury' of ethnography. A real problem in the current climate is the duration and intensity of fieldwork – and the financial costs involved. As the research landscape increasingly demands more and more publications, and quicker postgraduate theses, our capacity to generate long-term ethnographic projects is diminished. This is acutely felt within anthropology, of course, and to some extent in geography, and there is no easy answer to these challenges, but a Cultural Research agenda that doesn't allow time and space for sustained engagements with living communities has limited capacity to provide insights into culturally complex societies.

Beyond these fine keynote addresses, there were some specific papers that seem worthy of an exclusive mention. First and foremost among these is the collective effort of Professor Ien Ang, Associate Professor Gay Hawkins and Dr Greg Noble in their session "SBS as a site of Cosmopolitanism". As well as this, the "Experience my Otherness" session consisted of some cogent philosophical discourse from PhD students Aran Cross, Daniel Hourigan and Christine Collier. Specifically, I enjoyed Dr Gregory Gow's insightful paper on Sydney's multi-cultural suburb of Fairfield as a site of cosmopolitanism and, along a similar vein, Dr Konrad Gunesch's exploration of multilingual individuals as disseminators of advanced cosmopolitanism.

Congratulations and thanks are due to the conference organisers Dr David Ellison and Dr Ian Woodward as well as the team at the Centre for Public Culture and Ideas.

Ben Isakhan
PhD Scholar
Griffith University

Cultural Intimacy and Social Poetics: a new agenda for Cultural Research

A Master Class with Professor Michael Herzfeld

Centre for Cultural Research
University of Western Sydney
August 8-10

Postgraduate students from all over Australia gathered at the Centre for Cultural Research in August to attend a master class with Professor Michael Herzfeld, from Harvard University, together with Dr Greg Noble and Professor Kay Anderson, on 'Cultural Intimacy and Social Poetics: a new agenda for cultural research'. With most of the students' readers on the table drowning in post-it notes filled with queries and summaries, it was a rare (and much-needed) opportunity to interact with the author of the concept of cultural intimacy. Professor Herzfeld was unfailingly enthusiastic and generous over the three days as he gave mini-lectures and led discussions that were peppered with ethnographic vignettes - stressing the importance of being in the field, and of understanding the nuances of local language in uncovering processes and examples of cultural intimacy.

The notion of cultural intimacy looks at "the spaces of a shared understanding of what a national culture should be" (Herzfeld, 2005), where the formal positioning of the nation-state is open to the critique, embarrassment, irreverence and scepticism of its citizens. This internal wrestling over meaning in the relationship between people and their nation-state is the process by which cultural intimacy is continuously created. Citizens' knowledge of the wrestling over meaning that can take place within the nation-state is part of the nation's 'dirty laundry'. It is ironically the urge to keep this 'dirty laundry' secret that is the cause of loyalty to the nation-state. In short, cultural intimacy is made up of 'collective secrets' which are the means by which people become bound to the nation - through a loyalty carved out of embarrassment and "rueful self-recognition". Cultural intimacy is found in the deliberate, daily, localised and nuanced everyday.

I am quite sure that I'm not the only student who has, post-master class, immediately and fruitfully applied the notion of cultural intimacy to my research. By the end of the master class, discussions had shifted into the ideas of cultural intimacy within and beyond the national level - at the institutional and transnational levels. Further questions of the heavily anthropological context of cultural intimacy and its translatability to cultural studies were also raised, providing ongoing food for thought about the methodological gaps between disciplines which are otherwise intellectually close.

Reference

Herzfeld, M. (2005) *Cultural Intimacy: Social Poetics in the Nation-State* Routledge, New York (2nd ed.)

Reena Dobson

Centre for Cultural Research
University of Western Sydney

EDITOR'S PRIVILEGE

Where has all the fieldwork gone?

I recently participated in a discussion amongst a group of postgraduates drawn from a range of disciplinary backgrounds, but dominated by students from Cultural Studies and anthropology, being addressed by a noted anthropologist on the challenges posed by ethnography. In the middle of this discussion, one of the Cultural Studies students piped up and asked something along the lines of, 'what's this got to do with my research?' Over the following weeks, many of the other Cultural Studies students voiced the same concern: that the discussion was more for the anthropologists because it focused on ethnography as a methodology. I was gobsmacked at first because the seminar was framed explicitly as a consideration of ethnography for contemporary cultural research. Then I had one of those epiphanies about the shifts that had taken place in Cultural Studies - and the academy more broadly - over the last thirty years.

As we can all chant, mantra-like, Cultural Studies took as one of its early themes a desire to give voice to the lived experience of everyday life. Raymond Williams had taught us that 'culture is ordinary' and key groups - like the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, among others - developed projects around the ways in which this could be researched and analysed, sometimes drawing on traditions of ethnographic research developed in anthropology and sociology. This wasn't done without problems, or without an awareness of those problems. But it was done with the intention of 'getting at' bits of social and cultural life that deserved attention yet which had, in dominant scholarly traditions, frequently been ignored. Despite this, the concern with ethnographic work seems to have diminished over the last decade; so much so that a Cultural Studies postgraduate sees it as belonging to someone else's discipline.

So I checked some recent issues of a number of Cultural Studies journals and my fears were confirmed: there were plenty of papers based on media studies, textual analysis and policy issues, quite a few that were theoretically or philosophically driven, a large number of broad-ranging essay-type pieces, some analyses of particular sites or places, and a sampling of 'snapshot' interview-based research, but little evidence of sustained ethnographic fieldwork.

Now, I don't want to turn this into a 'text v people' argument that preoccupied some academics in the early 1990s. I don't see the array of methodologies available to cultural analysis as being in competition, nor in some hierarchy of authenticity that locates ethnography as the most insightful of all research practices in the Humanities. Cultural Studies read carefully the critiques within anthropology of the fetishising of the voice of lived reality and assumptions about the innocence of the researcher that marked some versions of anthropological practice. Methodologies are just ways of getting at particular types of information that are useful for us to claim things about the worlds we inhabit, and they are always partial. But it's for this reason that the diminishing role of ethnography in the broad field of Cultural Studies seems so odd.

That's not to say ethnography doesn't exist within Cultural Studies - I know of some great work being done - but it certainly isn't common. There are some pockets in

Precisely because this kind of positioning, rather than *posturing* (irrespective of whether posturing as strong or as weak) is so important, I find it worrying that so many of us early career cultural studies researchers express that we cannot really identify with cultural studies. Why is that? Does it matter? And do we have to do something about this? I think we do, otherwise During's accusation that we are not political enough might gain some clout. Resigning to a position of no power and giving in to marginalisation is giving in too easily to the so-called "new academic managerialism", and giving up the politics of our immediate work and research environment. The question then is how and what to do about it, and in which sites and through what kinds of activities.

In this sense, the recent CSAA forum debate on cultural studies also raises questions about the function of the CSAA discussion list as well as about the function of the CSAA itself. In a post that unfortunately did not get any direct responses, Mark Gibson hits the centre of the whole debate: the old and the new, and the interactions between both. He repeats an earlier observation of Melissa Gregg's: "the difficulty of speaking of the present and the future when we are constantly forced to mime in the shadows cast by senior colleagues". Well, the divided character of this particular debate on the discussion list—senior academics replying to each other's posts and junior academics replying to their respective posts (and expressing bewilderment at how to enter the debate among the senior academics)—was yet another exemplification of this difficulty. As Mark Gibson says in his post, some reckoning with the past is important for early career researchers, either because the "past" is still present, or because it is not but might leave a vacuum. And he reminds us rightly about the problems within the CSAA when senior figures disengaged from the scene. His call for a "healthy ecology of mixed experiences and ages" might be a good antidote to the many real anxieties

expressed in the debate by early career researchers. It is certainly what I am hoping to find within the CSAA—and during the upcoming CSAA conference in November in Sydney.

Angi Buettner
English & Media Studies
Massey University

SPACES FOR CULTURAL STUDIES

Sustaining Regional Cultural Studies?

Throughout 2004 and 2005, Australian universities have been gearing up for significant operational and structural changes envisioned by the Federal government. The manifesto for sector reform is very broad, and the detail is often difficult to see, but the common element linking the different parts of the reform agenda is the challenge to indicators of *sustainability*. When the post-secondary sector is aggressively reshuffled, which degree offerings—which disciplines—will seem relevant to new cohorts of students needing to offset the cost of their education against solid job outcomes? Will the increasing emphasis on internationally benchmarked research quality challenge the viability of more modest research agendas premised on local social utility? As universities cluster, network, merge, and generally hope for advantage in a future pecking order whose rules are not yet entirely clear, which institutions will receive sufficient funding, and to do what?

These questions have particular relevance for the future of teaching and research in regional and rural areas. Both regional and metropolitan universities have been encouraged by state and Federal funding to expand their undergraduate operations into more remote areas, making it possible for students in the country to complete an undergraduate degree without leaving home. These degree programs have often enjoyed the privilege of not having to be quite as commercially enterprising as, say, the exporting of undergraduate degrees; rather, they have been sustained to this point by discourses of mutuality, community engagement, and social equity.

As these satellite operations mature, there is a growing demand for equity to extend to access to higher degrees, and not only from students in teaching, nursing or agriculture studies. Students who have been introduced to cultural studies at the undergraduate level are generating ideas for research degree projects which draw directly on their experiences as media users and cultural operators in places where the presumptions of cultural habit generated in cities may only awkwardly apply. It is not only farmers and small business owners who are affected by the slow roll-out of broadband to regional areas, for example—across a wide social range of country areas the ordinary practices and experiences of everyday life are governed by the distinctive geographies of rural media access. Locally based research students can often see most clearly what cultural research is relevant and useful,

and what partnerships might be developed between the distant university provider and local cultural stakeholders.

In Australia, the "reformer's science" has engaged less vigorously with the cultural life of the country than with issues of difference, participation and justice in urban and suburban communities, or with the style of political imagination which expresses itself in policy and the law. Media analysis and audience research has often drawn on audiences conveniently to hand—the local constituencies for the mostly metropolitan institutions which can attract funding for this kind of research. As the contraction of research sustainability continues to squeeze small, recent and regional campuses, the prospect of their postgraduate students being able to work at home, on cultural issues

relevant to their communities, may diminish. Meanwhile, regional research communities which do start up will continue to be poorly served by the national powerlines of metropolitan scholarly networks as well as by the common arrangements of conference venues or the tour itineraries of cultural studies scholars visiting from overseas.

Cultural studies, with its commitment both to interdisciplinarity and to the reimagining of existing structures of cultural and political power, has an important role to play in sustaining regional research cultures. This is both opportunity and prompt for us to interact more closely with the disciplines which *have* been active in rural and regional research, not only in the Humanities (history, cultural geography), but also in the sciences (telecommunications engineering, agriculture). And at the same time, this is a chance to strike up new kinds of partnerships with stakeholder institutions in country areas, to challenge the presumption that geography of cultural studies itself stops in the suburbs.

Kate Bowles
Communication & Cultural Studies
University of Wollongong

“Not Political Enough”— Debate on Cultural Studies in Australia (and Elsewhere)

“Don’t mention the war!” Like the insensitive Basil in *Fawlty Towers*, Simon During, it seems, cannot stop mentioning it: cultural studies is not theoretical, philosophical, critical, and not political enough. Australian cultural studies, that is. We have all heard it before. In a call for a discussion and debate on the current state of Australian cultural studies in the context of changing paradigms, practices, and university policies, posted on the CSAA forum discussion list, Melissa Gregg used a quote from Simon During’s *Cultural Studies: A Critical Introduction*. The post’s subject line, “Conformist and lacking critical force”, is used as provocatively as During’s quote. And sure enough, During, on a short trip back from the US for which he left in 2001, and while writing again on the state of the Australian humanities for the HES of *The Australian*, responded by posting an even more dismissive version of his already dismissive swipe at Australian cultural studies shining through the quote Melissa Gregg used. Only this time During also added an astonishingly uncollegial swipe at individual scholars. Both Melissa Gregg’s and Simon During’s posts caused a lively debate on the CSAA discussion list.

The value of Simon During’s comments about the status of Australian cultural studies, in his quote and his subsequent posts to the list, have been sufficiently discussed on the list. I want to make a few observations about the quality of the discussion, and about who was responding to whom. Melissa Gregg’s original post invited debate about the current status of Australian cultural studies, particularly among young and early career cultural studies researchers. Simon During’s arrogant, often insulting, and personal attack on Australian cultural studies prompted a reply from Graeme Turner. And then suddenly it was all the big names and senior figures responding to each other. Don’t get me wrong, these posts were necessary and are interesting, particularly Graeme Turner’s and Stephen Muecke’s well-measured and well-written replies; but a lot of the “discussion” consisted of senior figures staking their claims in the land of Australian cultural studies. The debate turned into (self-) positioning rather than analysis of cultural studies, very much in the same way as Graeme Turner has identified Simon During’s posturing.

So where are the contributions to the present and future of cultural studies? Well, there actually is another thread within this debate. This one, though, is primarily among those other ones, the younger researchers, or early career researchers (ECRs in bureaucratese). And while in this thread people actually do discuss the state of

cultural studies (such as for example issues of hegemony, nationalism, or parochialism within cultural studies) and their position within it, unfortunately a lot of discussion time here is spent by lamenting a weak position of power. Often true and very understandable, but not necessarily “useful”. I do agree with Melissa Gregg and her comment in a later post that we need an “investment in, or a capacity to recognise the field of cultural studies at the level of younger researchers’ individual calling and identification”. Otherwise, she warns, we might lose what our senior colleagues have gained for us, and expresses her hope that the CSAA list, and the CSAA, will provide one venue to work this out and shape both the present and future of cultural studies.