

# WORKING PAPERS IN CULTURAL STUDIES, OR, THE VIRTUES OF GREY LITERATURE

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**Abstract** One of the more striking, if under-appreciated, aspects of publishing in cultural studies' early days was its provisionality. It is worth remembering that the chief publishing organ of the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies was not called Cultural Studies, or something similarly definitive, but rather Working Papers in Cultural Studies. By today's standards it would likely be considered 'grey literature', because the work appearing there announced itself as, on some level, in process. This essay offers a detailed history of cultural studies' early publication practices, particularly those associated with the Centre. Its purpose is to provide insight into the modes of scholarly communication through which the nascent field established itself in the 1960s and '70s. Equally, its purpose is to use this history as a means for taking stock of the field's apparatus of scholarly communication today. Cultural studies, the authors argue, might do well to open a space once again for less finished scholarly products - work that is as much constitutive (i.e., about community building) as it is instrumental (i.e., about conveying new research).

**Keywords** cultural studies, working papers, grey literature, scholarly communication, Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies

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This essay focuses on the writing and publication practices that developed in and around the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies from the time of its founding in 1964 until the cessation of the journal *Working Papers in Cultural Studies*, arguably its chief publication, in the late 1970s. Through our engagement with these practices, we want to develop an approach to the question 'what is cultural studies?' that is historical, speculative, and above all, materialist. It is historical insofar as it revisits the 'moment' of Birmingham, albeit from the perspective of its serial publications. It is speculative to the extent that we hope to build upon these historical traces and make some arguments for the ways in which textual production in cultural studies might be reformulated to allow for more productive engagements with the contemporary conjuncture. Finally, our approach is materialist because we want to de-emphasise the conceptual and biographical aspects of the work that took place at the Centre - the content, as it were - and to draw attention instead to the varied functions of that work vis-à-vis its form.<sup>1</sup>

What this amounts to, essentially, is 'a trip "below decks" into the "boiler

1. Of course, the risk of such an approach is to attribute too much to form, i.e., to assume that form determines content, circulation and reception. We want to be clear that we are not making a purely formalist argument in this sense. Indeed, we go to some length to show how form is not an abstract or sedentary category but one that emerges out of an ongoing process of meaning making. Similarly, while we believe strongly that form has some bearing on the modes of circulation and reception of texts (e.g., a heavy print dictionary is, *in principle*, less circulable than a lightweight magazine), we would not presume to suggest that one could simply read either of those two aspects off a textual form.

room” which was to become Cultural Studies’, as Stuart Hall has described it.<sup>2</sup> Beyond all the rows, beyond all the major works and their intellectual history lies a more mundane but no less important story to be told about Birmingham, and about cultural studies more generally.<sup>3</sup> This is a story about the instruments with which, and the infrastructure through which, cultural studies developed at the Centre and seeped out into the world. At its heart is the category ‘grey literature’, a term we borrow from library and information science to refer to pamphlets, conference proceedings, reports, white papers, newsletters, self-published journals, and other types of fugitive publications that lack high production values, the endorsement of blind peer review, or both. Grey literature may be academic, but its authority is typically in doubt. Also central to our story is process, or rather a range of methods for writing, duplicating, and publishing that came to be condensed under the heading of ‘working’. Our argument is that the success of the Birmingham Centre is attributable not only to the intellectual content of the work produced there in the 1960s and ’70s but also, and in no small part, to the grey literature in and through which those ideas circulated.

Given how the present moment is marked by debates and struggles at the intersection of knowledge production, intellectual property and labour, reconstructing this earlier moment might help to remind those of us currently working in cultural studies that the modes of research, writing and publication that are dominant today (namely those that favour the single author and the discrete, properly credentialed text) were not always the only, or even primary, ones that mattered.<sup>4</sup> As we will suggest in the conclusion, recovering the history of diverse forms of textual production identified with an earlier incarnation of cultural studies gives some precedence for allowing - perhaps even embracing - a much greater diversity of textual forms today. Moreover, while we develop this history in relationship to particular forms of writing, mainly the working paper, we do not only see this as being about different kinds of outcomes per se (e.g., grey literature versus peer-reviewed articles, or even monographs). Rather, we would like to position this essay as an invitation to consider the ways in which different modes of writing might relate to different forms of scholarly knowledge production. Of course, such an engagement with the routines and institutional contexts of the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies during the 1960s and ’70s will highlight the extent to which the structures that define research and education have radically changed in the intervening decades. The challenge is not to view this as a tragedy and lament what was lost, but to use historical precedent as a way of setting the stage for contemporary struggles.

## GETTING INTO PRINT

The history of publication at Birmingham Centre often begins with, or at least moves quickly to, ‘the big four’: Richard Hoggart’s *Uses of Literacy*

2. Stuart Hall, ‘Preface’, in Ann Gray et al (eds), *CCCS Selected Working Papers, Volume 2*, New York, Routledge, 2007, pxi.

3. Stuart Hall, ‘The Emergence of Cultural Studies and the Crisis of the Humanities’, *October*, Vol. 53 (Summer 1990): 11; Charlotte Brunsdon, ‘A Thief in the Night: Stories of Feminism in the 1970s at CCCS’, in D. Morley and K-H Chen (eds), *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, London, Routledge, 1996, pp278-80.

4. See especially The Edufactory Collective (eds), *Toward a Global Autonomous University: Cognitive Labor, The Production of Knowledge and Exodus from the Education Factory*, New York, Autonomedia, 2009; Andrew Ross, *Nice Work If You Can Get It: Life and Labor in Precarious Times*, New York, New York University Press, 2009; Ted Striphas, ‘Acknowledged Goods: Cultural Studies and the Politics of Academic Journal Publishing’, *Communication and Cultural/Critical Studies* 7, 1 (2010): 3-25.

(1957); Raymond Williams' *Culture and Society* (1958) and *Long Revolution* (1961); and E. P. Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963). While there were other texts that similarly informed the direction of work at the Centre (e.g., Williams and Orrom's *Preface to Film* and, later, Stuart Hall and Paddy Whannel's *The Popular Arts*), these four books immediately preceded the Centre's founding and served as touchstones for its fledgling intellectual enterprise.<sup>5</sup> There is another publication, however, that deserves to be included in this pantheon. While hardly lost to history, rarely does it figure in relationship to the big four: Rachel Powell's twenty-two page essay 'Possibilities for Local Radio', published in December 1965 as the Centre's first 'Working Paper'.<sup>6</sup> According to the Centre's third annual report to the University of Birmingham, dated 1966, Powell's essay was 'widely circulated and commented on', although it is difficult to substantiate in any detail what this claim meant.<sup>7</sup> Among the commentators was Raymond Williams, who, in the *Tribune*, called it 'a detailed and imaginative account of what local broadcasting could really do if it could be, from the beginning, unambiguously a social service'.<sup>8</sup>

Powell was full-time staff Research Associate working on the 'Gulbenkian project' (named for its funding agency), whose charge was to investigate 'the relationship between the providers of television programmes and their audiences' (and, obviously, that of radio).<sup>9</sup> 'Possibilities for Local Radio' is the first indication of the Centre's ability to deliver on one of its more ambitious promises, namely that it would not only pursue but also *publish* scholarly research.<sup>10</sup> As Williams has noted, the slow development of cultural studies did not immediately or cleanly lend itself to publishing:

[I]n the late forties, and with notable precedents in army education during the war, and with some precedents ... even in the thirties, Cultural Studies was extremely active in adult education. It only got into print and gained some kind of general intellectual recognition [later on]. I often feel sad about the many people who were active in that field at that time who didn't publish, but who did as much as any of us did to establish this work.<sup>11</sup>

The appearance of Powell's paper thus marked the crossing of an important threshold for cultural studies, at least in Britain, where publication had tended to be more the exception than the rule. More to the point, her Working Paper was an important first step in establishing a publishing *routine* for cultural studies.

The designation of the text as a 'Working Paper' merits closer examination, however, as the lexicon used to describe the publication and circulation of texts does not seem to have been determinate at this point in the Centre's history.<sup>12</sup> The Birmingham Centre annual report from 1964 refers to this type of publication as an 'occasional paper'. The lack of capitalisation suggests a strong degree of informality for the work that would eventually be appearing

5. Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS), *First Report, 1965-66*, Birmingham, Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, Birmingham University, November 1966.

6. John Mowitt has recently discussed the essay in some detail in *Radio: Essays in Bad Reception*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2011, pp156-66.

7. CCCS, *Third Report, 1965-66*, op. cit., p26.

8. Raymond Williams, 'Just what is Labour's policy for radio?', *Tribune*, 18 February 1966, p8.

9. CCCS, *Third Report, 1965-66*, op. cit., p20.

10. CCCS, *First Report*, Birmingham, Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, Birmingham University, September 1964, p10.

11. Raymond Williams, 'The Future of Cultural Studies' in Tony Pinkney (ed), *The Politics of Modernism: Against the New Conformists*, London, Verso Books, 1989, p154.

12. Mowitt, op., cit., 17.

under this rubric. The same type of publication is referred to in the report dated October 1965 as an 'Occasional Paper'. In fact Powell's essay, which was then in preparation, was referred to as such in the report.<sup>13</sup> The capitalisation likely indicates a higher degree of formalisation and a growing recognition of this body of work's potential intellectual and practical import for the emergent project of cultural studies in Britain, particularly as it involved reassuring university administrators and various sources of funding for the Centre.

The second release in the Centre's burgeoning series, Alan Shuttleworth's 'Two Working Papers in Cultural Studies', occurred during the 1966-1967 academic year. Here, though, 'Working Paper' functioned as a particular, not categorical, description. Its presence in the title referred as much to what Hall and Hoggart identified as the central question raised by the essays - 'Is this the Centre's notion of a finished piece of work?' - as it did to the ongoing research at the Centre emerging from the recently organised 'Texts' seminar.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, in the annual report dated January 1968, the series was once again referred to as 'Occasional Papers', which was consistent with the cover page of the Shuttleworth text.<sup>15</sup> In other words, the Shuttleworth piece was a work-in-progress belonging to what was now understood to be, more or less conclusively, a series of intermittently released publications tracing developments at the Centre.<sup>16</sup>

Clearly, more was at stake in the decision to call the series 'Occasional Papers' than just a name. Because the papers were a primary point of public contact for the Centre, they would be instrumental in helping to secure scholarly authority for its faculty and students. They would also then help to establish credibility for the little-known field of cultural studies, beyond the Centre's walls. The decision to stress the periodicity ('Occasional') of these papers over their provisionality ('Working') seems to have been an outcome of these types of considerations. When the series was discontinued, in 1971, it totalled seven publications in all. The Centre report dated October 1968 notes they were 'distributed to our growing mailing list' and 'also available on general purchase' by writing to the office secretary, Felicity Reeve.<sup>17</sup> The same report contains an extensive list of contacts at the University of Birmingham and at host of other universities scattered throughout the United Kingdom, Europe, and North America, which, presumably, comprised the bulk of the mailing list.<sup>18</sup> While this reveals little about the actual uptake of the material, it does provide a rough indication of the extent to which it may have travelled.

## (UN)FINISHED PRODUCTS

While the publication of Powell's 'Possibilities for Local Radio' marked a significant development in Cultural Studies in Britain, it was already apparent to Hoggart and his colleagues that the Occasional Papers were a necessary but insufficient vehicle for promoting the Centre and its work. Hence the claim, appearing in the second report (October 1965), that 'there is an

13. CCCS, *First Report*, op. cit., p18.

14. Stuart Hall and Richard Hoggart, 'Introduction' to Alan Shuttleworth, *Two Working Papers in Cultural Studies*, Birmingham, Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, 1966, np.

15. CCCS, *Fourth Report, 1966-1967*, Birmingham, Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, Birmingham University, January 1968, p38; Shuttleworth, op. cit., np.

16. It should be noted that Shuttleworth's essays were published as a typescript by the Centre itself rather than being typeset and printed professionally.

17. CCCS, *Fifth Report, 1968-1969*, Birmingham, Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, Birmingham University, October 1969, p22.

18. *Ibid.*, pp23-2.

19. CCCS, *Second Report*, Birmingham, Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, Birmingham University, October 1965, p21.

20. CCCS, *Third Report*, 1965-66, op. cit., p33.

21. CCCS, *Second Report*, op. cit., p18.

22. CCCS, *Third Report*, 1965-66, op. cit., p26.

23. CCCS, *Seventh Report*, 1972-1974, Birmingham, Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, Birmingham University, January 1974, p13.

urgent need for a regular journal devoted to the study of contemporary cultural problems'. The report says little beyond this, however, other than to note the indeterminacy of the audience and a prohibitive lack of finances.<sup>19</sup> The subsequent report (November 1966) goes into greater detail about the proposed publication and the Centre's plans for it:

We are now in need of a regular journal, devoted to cultural studies, in which research work can be published regularly, the critical books reviewed and new ideas put into the common pool. We could carry such a publication ourselves, especially if we were able to draw on other people working in much the same field, who are anxious to be in closer discussion with us and for whom no publication outlet at present exists. We have published one Working Paper [i.e., Occasional Paper], and two others are in preparation: but a journal would ease the pressure a good deal, and provide a stimulus to further research. Without such a journal the field lacks definition, contributions tend to be haphazard and the flow of work spasmodic.<sup>20</sup>

This passage underscores just how important the Centre's leadership imagined this publication would be and, indeed, how different they considered it from the Occasional Papers. Whereas the latter were conceived of as 'either short studies of some cultural problem, or a contribution to a current matter under discussion in the cultural field', the former would be endowed with loftier goals.<sup>21</sup> It would define cultural studies; raise awareness about new research and regularise its release; and involve scholars from outside the Centre.

The final goal was arguably the most important. It pointed to an impending shift in the sociality of cultural studies and its publications. The Occasional Papers were primarily broadcast texts. The emanated (appropriately enough) from the Centre and diffused into the world. This is not to suggest the flow of communication was strictly one-way, although the nature of the series was such that its main purpose was to get the word *out* about the Centre, its people and their research.<sup>22</sup> The proposed journal would have a different orientation. It would continue the job of getting the word out, yet it would also be tasked with bringing the word *in* given its openness to the research of scholars unaffiliated with the Centre. Thus it promised to transform Birmingham from a broadcast centre into a hub for cultural studies, at least where publication was concerned. Moreover, the journal would in principle align better than the Occasional Papers with the traffic of people into and out of the Centre, which had already become a crossroads for visiting scholars including Daniel Boorstin, Alexander Cockburn, Dell Hymes, Fredric Jameson, Leo Lowenthal, David Riesman, E.P. Thompson, and Raymond Williams, among numerous others.<sup>23</sup>

Despite the fact that the journal was fairly well conceptualised by 1966,

it would be another five years before it materialised in print. Released in the summer of 1971, the first issue of *Working Papers in Cultural Studies* was a major achievement for the Centre. It also posed something of a risk, according to the report dated December 1971: 'The journal represents a considerable investment by the Centre both intellectually and financially so it is important this attempt to make more public the Centre's work should succeed'.<sup>24</sup> The appearance of the journal (particularly in its name) marked a kind of homecoming, too - specifically, to the language of process Hoggart and his colleagues had embraced and then quickly abandoned with regard to the Occasional Papers. Like the return of the repressed, 'Working' was back and more prevalent than ever, now as the lead term of the Centre's flagship publication.

Writing in 2008, Hall observed that *Working Papers in Cultural Studies* 'was launched in this period to raise the profile of the Centre's work (the tentative character of whose title tells its own story)'.<sup>25</sup> But to what extent is it fair to say the journal's title 'tells its own story?' Indeed, just as the meaning of 'Working' was hardly straightforward within the context of the Occasional Papers, so it was (and is) within the context of the journal. If nothing else, it seemed to connote more than just 'tentative'. Consider what the report dated December 1971 had to say about the Centre's scholarly endeavours: 'We ... regard our editorial and publicity work on finished products, and our production of a journal, as integral to our attempt to establish a radical and disciplined approach to the study of social and cultural communication'. The report then went on to indicate that *Working Papers* 'is intended as an academic publication'.<sup>26</sup> As such it would address a scholarly audience, primarily, and conform to many if not most of the conventions of scholarly writing. The subsequent report, dated January 1974, added that the journal would 'print work of a high quality'.<sup>27</sup> 'Disciplined'. 'Academic'. 'High quality'. These are probably not the first adjectives that come to mind for a journal whose express purpose was to present works-in-progress (at least, not *today*) - and yet, there they are.

It is possible to make sense of this tension by stressing the bureaucratic function of the Centre reports. Convincing the Birmingham administration of the integrity of the journal, and of the unit more broadly, must have been on the minds of Hoggart and his colleagues. During its first five years the Centre had been self-sustaining, propped up financially by grants from Penguin Books, Chatto & Windus, the Observer Trust, and an undisclosed 'well-wisher'.<sup>28</sup> When the Centre finally started receiving direct financial support from the University, in 1969, the change surely would have heightened its sense of accountability to the institution and thus its need to tout the seriousness of its scholarly initiatives.

While there is probably merit to this story, it risks explaining away the tension at the heart of *Working Papers* more than actually explaining it. It may be that the journal managed to strike a unique balance between rigour

24. CCCS, *Sixth Report, 1969-1971*, Birmingham, Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, Birmingham University, December 1971, p17.

25. Stuart Hall, 'Preface', *Op. cit.*, ix.

26. CCCS, *Sixth Report, 1969-1971*, *op. cit.*, pp16-7.

27. CCCS, *Seventh Report, 1972-1974*, *Op. cit.*, p13.

28. CCCS, *First Report*, op. cit., p13; Ted Striphas, 'Banality, Book Publishing and the Everyday Life of Cultural Studies', *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 4 (July 2002): 438-60, <http://doi.org/bncg6b>

29. Stuart Hall, personal communication.

30. Paul Buhle, 'Working Papers in Cultural Studies', *Radical History Review*, 19 (Winter 1978-79): 161-3.

31. *Ibid.*, p163.

32. Rosalind Coward, 'Class, "Culture" and the Social Formation', *Screen* 18, 1 (Spring 1977): 75-106; Iain Chambers, et al, 'Debate: Marxism and Culture', *Screen* 18, 4 (Winter 1977): 109-19; Rosalind Coward, 'Debate: Response by Rosalind Coward', *Screen* 18, 4 (Winter 1977): 120-2.

33. Chambers et al, op. cit., p109.

34. *Ibid.*

35. CCCS, *Report, 1975-1976*, Birmingham, Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, Birmingham University, 1976, p7.

36. *Working Papers* is listed as part of a reading list on 'Popular Culture and Mass Media Studies' prepared by

and provisionality, one that proved highly productive for the Centre and its interlocutors. As Hall has recently put it:

We did not think of these as necessarily finished products. We wanted to publicize the work we were doing to any other intellectual communities that might have been interested (without knowing who they were necessarily) and to a wider public. And we wanted to know who was interested, and to converse with them.<sup>29</sup>

Provisionality was not a liability, but a way to start a conversation. Paul Buhle affirmed as much in 1978, in a review of *Working Papers* published in the American journal *Radical History Review*: 'Sometimes the essays in the journal appear to have been snatched out of that atmosphere too nimbly, without the gun-and-camera guide that readers (particularly non-Britishers) could use to understand the entire intellectual and political context of the study'.<sup>30</sup> Buhle quickly reversed course, however, observing that the journal's contributors were working through 'matters of great importance' and achieving promising results. The material, wrote Buhle, 'is head and shoulders above what American historians, sociologists and journalists have given us on similar subjects'.<sup>31</sup>

From around the same period, a similar presentation of the provisional nature of the *Working Papers* can be seen in an essay published in *Screen* in late 1977 by the members of the Centre's working group on subcultures, in response to an article by Rosalind Coward from earlier that year.<sup>32</sup> The bulk of the response is taken up with a repudiation of Coward's description of 'a single, monolithic "Centre line"' on ideology and class.<sup>33</sup> While taking up the arguments raised by Coward, the response also argues for a different way of approaching the texts. Rather than fixing and identifying the positions outlined in the essays with a particular school of thought, the authors posit that *Working Papers* should be treated as 'ongoing work' and 'a provisional sketch'.<sup>34</sup>

At its height *Working Papers* had an impressive initial print run of 2500 copies per issue, with a frequency of two issues per year. And according to the Centre report for the years 1975-1976, the eight issues of the journal thus far produced had all sold out 'despite occasional re-printings'. While it is clear that *Working Papers* (and, by extension, the Centre) was gaining an audience, it is difficult to trace with clarity the readership for the initial publications. There are, however, some traces of the paths along which it travelled.<sup>35</sup> The exchange published in *Screen* was the product of a longer relationship between the circle of researchers associated with the two journals that dated back at least to the early 1970s.<sup>36</sup> Elsewhere, Hall has commented on the relationship between the work going on at the Centre and the importance of the *Screen* publication in the 1970s.<sup>37</sup> In 1976, *History Workshop Journal* listed *Working Papers* as one of the 'journals to notice'.<sup>38</sup> However, the Centre's publications

were not always judged to be successful when it came to speaking to a broader public. An article examining the relationship between educational reform and working class culture published in 1974 laments that, in spite of the relevance of the work being done at Birmingham to the diverse community engaged with these issues, its impact has been limited: 'much of this work is conducted and reported within the very closed world of research papers, small-run poorly distributed pamphlets and inaccessible academic publications'.<sup>39</sup>

Regardless of the ways in which the language of process conflicted with the practice of preparing texts for an increasingly visible publication, it is worth recognising the extent to which the provisional nature of the journal was foregrounded in relationship to the nature of debate such a publication might engender. What emerged was a way of talking about publication that never fully settled the relationship between the process of research, the formalisation of writing and the circulation of particular texts. This way of talking about publication also challenged the relationship between the practice of research and the resulting textual object by drawing attention to the ways in which the physical circulation of the texts might also produce particular kinds of social relations. While such an attitude towards publication sometimes stood in tension with the fixed nature of the texts themselves, it is important to see it as part of the ongoing institutional and intellectual displacements taking shape as part of the project of cultural studies.

## RAPID COMMUNICATION

The history of the Working Papers presented so far can be seen to develop in two, seemingly contradictory directions. First, there was a growing trend towards the formalisation of publication - the gradual move from generic occasional papers to the nominal 'Occasional Papers', and on to the appearance of *Working Papers in Cultural Studies*. Second, there is an ongoing commitment to acknowledging the provisionality, partiality and dialogic nature of the project of cultural studies as captured in these publications. However, the concept of 'Working' is still more complicated than simply suggesting that the published material would continue to develop, since it was operationalized within a context including publications other than just *Working Papers in Cultural Studies*.

The journal's launch coincided with the cancellation of the existing series of Occasional Papers. The former's structured publication schedule meant that new research in cultural studies would henceforth be appearing more predictably. But it also meant that the Centre was less equipped than it had been to respond to current events, for its scholarly output was now subject to the dictates of an artificially imposed time-frame. Out of this was born a new series of Stencilled Occasional Papers, launched in 1974. The Centre report for 1975-1976 describes them as 'a means of rapid communication of Centre work to interested people and groups'. In contrast to the previous series of

the BFI Education Department published in *Screen*, 11, 4-5 (1970): 148-71.

37. Terry Bolas, *Screen Education: From Film Appreciation to Media Studies*, Bristol, Intellect, 2009, pp266-8.

38. 'Noticeboard', *History Workshop Journal*, 2, 1 (1976): 233.

39. Ken Worpole, 'The School and the Community: Towards a Common Culture', *The Urban Review* 7, 2, (1974): 95.



40. CCCS, *Report, 1975-1976*, op. cit., p35.

41. *Ibid.*, pp35-6; We are also grateful to Lawrence Grossberg (personal communication) for the information about the mimeograph machine.

42. John Clarke, personal communication, February 28, 2012.

43. CCCS, *Report, 1975-1976*, Op. cit., p35.

44. John Clarke, personal communication, op. cit.

45. CCCS, *Ninth Report, 1977-8*, Birmingham, Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, Birmingham University, January 1978, pp2, 25.

46. CCCS, *Ninth Report, 1977-8*, op. cit; Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, *Twelfth Report, 1980-81*, Birmingham, Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, Birmingham University, January 1981.

47. CCCS, *Ninth Report, 1977-8*, op. cit., p24.

Occasional Papers, which had been professionally printed and bound in slick, glossy covers, the Stencilled Occasional Papers were 'produced as cheaply as possible, stapled without binding or card covers'.<sup>40</sup> They were copied in-house on a Gestetner mimeograph machine and sold for between fifteen and fifty-five pence, postpaid (except for overseas orders, which required an additional shipping charge).<sup>41</sup> They were also passed along informally among faculty, students and friends of the Centre.<sup>42</sup>

The look of the Stencilled Occasional Papers both embodied and conveyed the speed of their production. And in this respect they shed additional light on how the concept of 'Working' was to be understood with respect to the journal. The material form of these essays seemed to suggest they were even more provisional than the articles appearing in *Working Papers in Cultural Studies*, which, though rough around the edges itself, exuded relatively higher production values. That is to say, the Stencilled Occasional Papers were evidently more 'Working' than the *Working Papers*. The Centre report for 1975-1976 adds to this, noting the provisionality of their content as well. The Stencilled Occasional Papers 'commonly consist of worked-up versions of papers given by Centre members at conferences or to internal seminars. Some are specially commissioned by the Centre; others are the product of theses, projects or collective work in sub-groups'.<sup>43</sup> Or as John Clarke, who as a graduate student was attached to the Centre from 1972-1980, put it: 'they were things we wrote about two-thirds of the way through thinking about things'.<sup>44</sup>

The Centre produced fifty-four Stencilled Occasional Papers by the end of 1978 and added a few more titles to the list in subsequent years. At least some appear to have enjoyed significant uptake beyond the Centre, particularly within the realm of tertiary education.<sup>45</sup> Their circulation flowed from their timeliness and strength of intellectual contribution, no doubt, yet it seems reasonable to surmise that it also had something to do with the minimalism of their *matériel* and hence the ease with which they could be shared. Moreover, their 'legs' may have had something to do with the way in which they were packaged in the Centre reports. The Stencilled Occasional Papers are grouped into series - 'Media Series', 'Sub- and Popular Culture Series', 'Women Series', etc. - in the reports dated January 1978 and January 1981, suggesting an ease of fit with courses on these and other relevant topics.<sup>46</sup>

## FROM ARTISANSHIP TO MODERN PRODUCTION

It was around this time (the late-1970s) that the Centre's whole publishing apparatus experienced a major metamorphosis. In 1976 the Centre embarked on what it called a 'new' series of pamphlets, whose look and feel resembled the first series of Occasional Papers. In contrast to the Occasional Papers, the pamphlets would be 'written in a less academic style with a wider audience in mind, and with a more topical focus'.<sup>47</sup> An element of professionalism complemented the ethos of public engagement. Orders for the pamphlets

would be fulfilled not by the Centre, as had been the custom for most of its other serials, but by the London-based Publications Distribution Cooperative, or PDC. But to call the pamphlet series ‘new’ was not entirely accurate. The Centre had been producing pamphlets throughout the 1970s, albeit sporadically. In fact *Policing the Crisis* had begun life as a pamphlet called *Twenty Years*, released in 1973 (price: 15p).<sup>48</sup> Thus the ‘new’ series seems to have represented an attempt to formalise what, up until that point, had been a more or less informal type of publication. It proved to be the Centre’s least developed publishing venture for reasons that remain unclear. Despite the tone of optimism surrounding the pamphlets in the Centre reports from the late-1970s, only two were ever produced: one, by Roger Grimshaw and Paul Lester, on *The Meaning of the Loch Ness Monster* (price: 60p); and the other, by the Women in Fascism Study Group, entitled *Breeders for Race and Nation - Women and Fascism in Britain Today* (price: 50p).<sup>49</sup>

As *Working Papers in Cultural Studies* gained visibility throughout the 1970s, its structure and status underwent a transformation as well. The covenant from Penguin Press, which had underwritten the Centre financially since its inception, finally lapsed in 1976. That translated into a loss of £2400 per year, or about £16,000 in today’s terms. While that might not seem like a significant loss, the impact must have been felt given the complaint about ‘slender financial resources’ appearing in the report dated January 1978.<sup>50</sup> Indeed it was becoming less tenable, economically, for the Centre to continue producing *Working Papers* without outside assistance. In 1977 the Centre inked a deal with PDC to start distributing the journal, which seems to have reduced the pressure somewhat.

*Working Papers* helped to raise the Centre’s profile, but along the way it became something of an albatross. The daily grind of managing, editing, typesetting and promoting a successful journal was also taking a toll, consuming precious time that faculty and students might otherwise have devoted to research. As was noted in the report from 1978, ‘[O]utside support [to aid with the publication of the journal] will release our own previously extensive labours in journal production for other work, and other publications’.<sup>51</sup> Hall, Director since Hoggart’s resignation in 1973, and his colleagues thus decided to reduce the frequency of the journal to a single issue per year, starting in 1976.<sup>52</sup> When that failed to make *Working Papers* more manageable, they decided on a more radical plan. Issue ten (spring 1977) would be the final one appearing under the Centre’s imprimatur. Hutchinson, which had produced the reprint of the acclaimed issue ‘Resistance Through Rituals’ (number seven/eight, 1975), picked up the publication thereafter. It would henceforth be published annually as series of Centre books, beginning with what would have been issue eleven of *Working Papers*: ‘Women Take Issue: Aspects of Women’s Subordination’. The latter, according to the report dated December 1978, represented a definitive shift ‘from artisan-journal to modern production methods’ and perhaps, then, a sense in which the series

48. CCCS, *Seventh Report, 1972-1974*, op. cit., pp15-6.

49. CCCS, *Eleventh Report, 1979-80*, Birmingham, Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, Birmingham University, November 1979, p26.

50. CCCS, *Ninth Report, 1977-8*, op. cit., p22.

51. CCCS, *Ninth Report, 1977-8*, op. cit., p3.

52. CCCS, *Supplement to Eighth Report*, Birmingham, Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, Birmingham University, 1977, p9.

53. CCCS, *Eleventh Report, 1979-80*, op. cit., p4.

54. Pricing was as follows: 70p/issue, or \$2.25/issue USA (£7.75/\$12.00 in today's terms); a one-year, two issue subscription cost £1.20, or \$4.00 USA (£13.50/\$21.25 in today's terms). CCCS, *Sixth Report, 1969-1971*, op. cit., p18.

55. CCCS, *Seventh Report, 1972-1974*, op. cit., p23.

56. CCCS, *Report, 1975-1976*, op. cit., p35b.

57. CCCS, *Ninth Report, 1977-8*, op. cit., p35.

had become even less 'Working' than it had been previously.<sup>53</sup>

There is a final type of publication, one rarely acknowledged yet deeply important, by which Birmingham also became known to the world: the Centre reports. The first five, issued between 1964 and 1968, read as if they were first and foremost bureaucratic instruments intended for University administrators. They consisted largely of internal accounting - of courses, students, visitors, projects, publications, finances, facilities, and goals - framed more often than not by remarks about the Centre's efforts to define cultural studies. The tone of these documents shifted with the sixth report, dated December 1971. It opened with the most thoroughgoing description of the development of cultural studies, and of the Centre, to date. Maybe even more significant, though, was the first appearance of pricing information for its publications, specifically for the newly-launched *Working Papers in Cultural Studies*.<sup>54</sup> The subsequent report, dated January 1974, ended with a full-page ad for the journal, including pricing information for individuals, libraries, and bookshops.<sup>55</sup> The eighth report, covering the years 1975-1976, contained a price list for the Stencilled Occasional Papers.<sup>56</sup> The ninth report, dated January 1978, included a similar list plus an order form.<sup>57</sup>

Together the advertisements, order forms and price lists suggest a shift in the mode of address of the Centre reports. They continued to speak to university administrators, to be sure, but throughout the 1970s they also came to address audiences beyond Birmingham. If nothing else, the reports were positioned as marketing vehicles for the Centre's other - more recognisably scholarly - publications. By the same token, the reports had their own scholarly dimension, too. Most are strewn with citations, block quotes, and other aspects of academic apparatus, especially in the opening discussions of the field of cultural studies and in the extended reflections on the intellectual ambitions of the Centre's graduate seminars. In the interval between the 'big four' and the appearance of *Working Papers in Cultural Studies*, the Centre reports filled a major void in terms of defining the field publicly, and indeed regularly.

Their reach was impressive, moreover, at least in the years leading up to Hall's resignation from the Centre in 1979. The report dated January 1978 puts its circulation at around 3000 copies, distributed to 'all manner and shade of inquirers'.<sup>58</sup> The unusual qualifier at the end suggests the mailing list exceeded the Centre's aforementioned institutional connections and its network of former students and faculty affiliates. To accept the status of the 'reports' at face value is thus to do them a disservice by over-emphasising their administrative role. As an archival resource, they offer fascinating glimpses into developments at the Centre both in the day-to-day and over the longer-term. In their own time they helped to lay important definitional groundwork for cultural studies and to promote the Centre's range of other publishing initiatives.

## CONCLUSION: CULTURAL STUDIES AS TEXTUAL ECOSYSTEM

By tracing how *Working Papers in Cultural Studies* took shape over time and in relation to other modes of publication, our purpose is not simply to outline the development of one or more of the field's groundbreaking serials. Rather, the purpose of this journey through the archives is to highlight the variety of modes of textual production that characterised cultural studies in these years. As we have seen, it is important to recognise that a publication in cultural studies at Birmingham took shape with respect to several different modes of writing and forms of materialization, which themselves involved a variety of different temporalities, scales and institutional orientations. The transition between these was not always clear, for example the relationship between the 'administrative' writing of the Centre reports, the intermittent nature of the Occasional Papers and the increasingly professionalised structures of *Working Papers* as an academic journal. The work at Birmingham was not unique in this regard, however, and it is important to remember the degree to which the development of cultural studies in contexts outside of Britain was similarly mixed.<sup>59</sup> Indeed there are a great many stories yet to be told about the means and material of cultural studies' entextualisation.

Alongside the diversity of textual genres that characterised writing at the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, the degree to which its members' patterns of working and writing needed to be invented is worth highlighting, as is the way in which those patterns affected both the form and content of the Centre's publications. The various forms of publication must be seen as part of an ongoing struggle to develop a mode of writing that extended the exchanges and encounters of everyday life at the Centre. It is along these lines that Hoggart and Hall characterise the general purpose of Shuttleworth's 'Working Papers' in their preface to the volume.<sup>60</sup> And, as we have seen, this is a theme that returned to the fore as *Working Papers* became an increasingly formal space of publication, especially when the Stencilled Occasional papers started to appear. While the extent to which the various publication were, or were not, successful in this goal remains open to debate and further historical examination. Nonetheless, texts tended to be seen as a deeply social rather than solitary objects at Birmingham.<sup>61</sup>

The social nature of texts at the Centre points directly to a second key aspect when understanding the innovative nature of its writing and publishing: its commitment to the ethics of circulation. In some ways, this commitment is telegraphed boldly in every bibliography of the Centre; after all, 'Stencilled Papers' is a clear reminder of the extent to which work at the Centre relied on the existence of cheap and accessible reproduction technologies. But, beyond this, one should also bear in mind the degree to which publication as a mode of circulating multiple copies of text in production was seen as central to the 'work' of cultural studies. While the visibility brought by the *Working Papers* can be read as part of a project of institutional justification, it must also be

58. CCCS, *Ninth Report, 1977-8*, op. cit., p5.

59. For a similarly complex history of publication in cultural studies in Australia, see 'Relations of Theory: Meaghan Morris Talks With Stephen Muecke', in D. Carter (ed), *Outside the Book: Contemporary Essays on Literary Periodicals*, Sydney, Local Consumption Publications, 1991, pp57-78.

60. Hoggart and Hall, 'Introduction' to Shuttleworth, op. cit.

61. For this reason, it is worth considering the relationship between the work in Birmingham and the work that emerged from another collective, *Social Text*, based in Madison, Wisconsin and later New York City.

seen as part of a project in which the circulation of research in progress was seen as an important - even essential - part of intellectual practice. Indeed, this is a commitment that extended beyond the publications we have been concentrating on here. As Lawrence Grossberg recalls, shortly after his arrival at the Centre in 1968, he received a paper outlining the Centre's protocols: 'one of the bold things it says is, there is one rule in the Centre. Your greatest research tool is not the library, but carbon paper. Everything should be ... typed on carbon paper'.<sup>62</sup>

62. Lawrence Grossberg, personal communication.

With an eye to the present, the significance of this ethics of circulation has only grown in importance. The Centre's fledgling efforts to give legs to its own and others' research stand in contrast to the channels through which cultural studies gets distributed today. Dozens of highly-formalised international journals now service the field, a preponderance of them owned and operated by two for-profit companies: Taylor & Francis and Sage Publications. Both have done a great service in terms of promoting cultural studies and helping to usher the field into the digital age. However, their exorbitant subscription prices, embargoes on digital pre- and post-prints, content paywalls, costly licensing fees, and other strictures have created a situation in which cultural studies now seems to circulate less freely than it did in the era of mimeograph machines and postage stamps.<sup>63</sup> One telling example: a digital copy of Stuart Hall's essay 'Marx's Notes on Method: A "Reading" of the "1857 Introduction" [to the *Grundrisse*]', reprinted in *Cultural Studies* in 2003, costs about £22 on the Taylor & Francis website.<sup>64</sup> The same essay, published originally as a Stencilled Occasional Paper in the mid-1970s, cost between 25p and 50p postpaid from the Centre, or approximately £2.35-£4.75 in inflation-adjusted terms.<sup>65</sup> Clearly, there is something to be said for independent 'artisan-journals' and ad-hoc distribution networks, notwithstanding the resources it takes to make and maintain them.

63. Ted Striphas, 'Acknowledged Goods', op. cit.

64. <http://doi.org/dzc7rt>

65. CCCS, *Report, 1975-1976*, op. cit., p36; CCCS, *Twelfth Report, 1980-81*, op. cit., p2.

But the issue here is deeper than accessibility and cost. Also at stake is the sociality of intellectual production. As Stephen Muecke put it in 1991: 'If *Cultural Studies* ends up only for academics or libraries because of its cost, what happens to the old indeterminate spaces where a lot of these journals emerged?'<sup>66</sup> There is, as we have suggested, a close tie between specific forms of publication and the modes of producing for them; a change in the one is bound to affect the other, as in an ecosystem. For cultural studies this has meant a move deeper into the academy, as its publication outputs have become more recognisably 'scholarly' and tightly enmeshed in institutionalised structures of reward (e.g., grants, promotion and tenure, etc.). The move has not strictly been a loss, for it has lent the field greater intellectual credibility - but there is a trade-off. Hall once described the Birmingham Centre as 'the locus to which we [he and his colleagues] *retreated*' and not, as it were, the place from which their discourse about culture and politics proceeded. That happened instead in 'the dirty outside world', where scholars do not have the luxury of addressing one another exclusively.<sup>67</sup>

66. 'Relations of Theory', op. cit., p67.

67. Hall, op. cit., p12; emphasis in original. See also Gilbert B. Rodman, 'Cultural Studies is Ordinary', in M. Seidl, et al (eds), *About Raymond Williams*, London, Routledge, 2010, p157.

The fact that Birmingham has endured as an intellectual - even mythical - touchstone for cultural studies is attributable to a complex mix of factors, among them the modes and material of its publications in the 1960s and '70s. Indeed, the Centre's success is a testament to the virtues of architecting an apparatus of 'scholarly' communication chiefly around grey literature. The history we have presented shows how grey literature is not the other of rigorous intellectual work but, in the case of cultural studies, a key condition of the success of the field. It also shows how the scholarly value (credibility, authority) of grey literature is relative and not absolute, sometimes shifting as new types of documents get introduced into an existing publishing repertoire. That *Working Papers in Cultural Studies* appears to have become less provisional, 'working' or grey upon the introduction of the series of Stencilled Occasional Papers bears witness to this elasticity, as does all the uncertainty about how to imagine the earlier series of Occasional (née Working) Papers from the 1960s. Moreover, the two-volume, 1100-page compendium *CCCS Selected Working Papers*, published in 2007 by Routledge, points to the capacity of grey literature to cross over into officialdom, especially in instances where it has stood the test of time.<sup>68</sup> Finally, the history of grey literature at the Centre lends further credence to Gary Hall, Kathleen Fitzpatrick, and others' arguments about how the forms of scholarly communication today ought to be expanded to include not only monographs and peer-reviewed articles but also 'artifacts of a more unusual nature'.<sup>69</sup> But this is also the limit of our argument, at least for the time being, given the contemporary academy's obsession with measurable outcomes, aversion to risk, and narrow understanding of how scholarly credentialing can and should occur. Indeed, the growing pressures of these modes of assessment, specifically the Research Assessment Exercises of 2001, played some role in the closure of the Centre in 2002.<sup>70</sup>

Our purpose in outlining this history is not to lament what has been lost but to provide a richer understanding of the ways in which research and publication intersected during a particularly salient 'moment' for cultural studies. This process remains ongoing, of course, occurring in a more densely packed textual ecosystem than before, when scholarly essays and books stood as dominant forms of communication. Today, printed monographs and journal essays sit alongside blogs, social networking sites, peer-to-peer file sharing services, mobile apps, virtual environments, and a host of other technologies that academics are now conscripting to their cause. But what the Birmingham Centre teaches us - and here we refer to the 'lesson' of 2002 - is that the social and institutional contexts in which scholarly texts circulate matter at least as much as the technological ones.<sup>71</sup> While there might be a desire to have such alternative forms of scholarly production recognized as substantial contributions to scholarly discourse, such a goal runs the risk of simply furthering the kinds of managerial oversight that restrain rather than encourage intellectual community, curiosity, and debate. Instead of seeking to adapt contemporary scholarly writing so that these insurgent forms 'count',

68. Ann Gray et al (eds), *CCCS Selected Working Papers*, 2 Vols., New York, Routledge, 2007; see also 'Relations of Theory', op. cit., p57.

69. Gary Hall, *Digitize This Book! The Politics of New Media, or Why We Need Open Access Now*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2008, p163; see also Kathleen Fitzpatrick, *Planned Obsolescence: Publishing, Technology, and the Future of the Academy*, New York, NYU Press, 2011, p79.

70. Frank Webster, 'Cultural Studies and Sociology at, and After, the Closure of the Birmingham School', *Cultural Studies*, 18, 6 (2004): 848-852, <http://doi.org/10.1080/10732100410001638888>

71. Fitzpatrick, op. cit., pp116, 121, 126, 192.

perhaps the project should be to develop more autonomous venues in which research can be divorced from strict demands for accountability. It is here that one might begin to interrogate the structure and modes of address in the texts themselves, rethinking not just practices of publication and the circulation of texts but the texture and tone of scholarly writing itself. What the Birmingham Centre also teaches us - and here we refer to the 'lesson' of the 1960s and '70s - is that cultural studies seems to function best when it embraces an ethics of experimentation where publication is concerned. It teaches us to approach any such experimentation with humility, moreover, knowing that it takes significant labour to produce forms of scholarly literature - grey or otherwise - that are content rich, smartly curated, and enduring.

When Stuart Hall says that 'cultural studies is not one thing; it has never been one thing', it seems useful in light of the foregoing to adopt as materialist a sense of the 'what' of cultural studies as possible.<sup>72</sup> Indeed the field is not only many positions but also many things, not least of which are the physical forms in and through which it has found embodiment. Cultural studies is people, places, words, and ideas, but it is also, and in no small part, *textual matter* - matter, we believe, that offers perspective on what cultural studies was or is, and where it should be going.

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72. Hall, 'Emergence of Cultural Studies', op. cit., p11.